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KHULISA MANAGEMENT SERVICES

CONSOLIDATED REPORT ON COVID-19 RESEARCH

FINAL

Data Collection and Analysis for the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS), the Reading Support Project (RSP) and Benchmarking

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Definition
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephonic Interview
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EFAL	English First Additional Language
EGR	Early Grade Reading
EGRS	Early Grade Reading Study
FPD	Foundation for Professional Development
GoSA	Government of South Africa
HL	Home Language
HOD	Head of Department
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity
KK	Dr Kenneth Kaunda District
NMM	Ngaka Modiri Molema District
ORF	Oral Reading Fluency
PED	Provincial Education Department
PERFORMANCE	Practical Education Research For Optimal Reading and Management: Analyze, Collaborate, Evaluate
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment

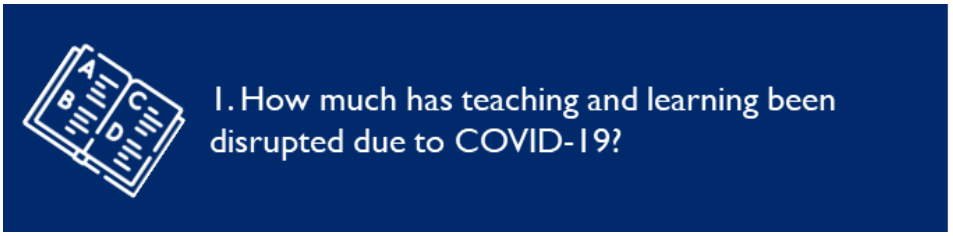
Acronym	Definition
PSS-10	Perceived Stress Scale
PSS10-C	Perceived Stress Scale COVID-19 modification
RSP	Reading Support Project
SMS	Short Message Service
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Khulisa Management Services is submitting this Report on COVID-19 Research to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and their counterpart, the Department of Basic Education (DBE). This report derives from the data collection and analysis for the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS I), the Reading Support Project (RSP) and the Language Benchmarking study in two districts in North West, South Africa. It is a follow-up to the *Preliminary Report on COVID-19 Research* (Bisgard et al., 2021), which was submitted in May 2021.

The target sample for the COVID-19 research was 229 Quintile 1-3[1] primary schools in two districts in the North West Province, and the team successfully collected data from 225 schools. The COVID-19 research was carried out in schools that are part of the longitudinal Early Grade Reading Study I (EGRS I) thus, the sample was prescribed by the DBE.[2] In addition to testing nearly 10,000 learners' reading skills, the team gathered data from principals, Grade 3 and 7 teachers, Foundation Phase Heads of Department (HODs), caregivers and learners. Fieldwork took place between September and November 2021. In addition, school functionality and classroom observations were conducted. An educator telephonic survey was conducted in January 2021 with 439 teachers, and a telephonic survey administered in October of 2021 captured data from 1,925 caregivers.

Since COVID-19 is a topical issue and as the DBE is working with South African provincial authorities to consider actions to address issues created by COVID-19, this report is presented with recommendations for the DBE.



Relative to a pre-COVID-19 year (2019), Grade 3 learners lost, on average, 56 percent of contact school days in 2020, while Grade 7 learners lost, on average, 49 percent of contact school days in 2019.

The average lost days mask the fact that some learners attended much less schooling than others, due to school rotation policies; 44 percent of the schools in the sample were still implementing rotational learning where the learners attend every other day, so their average attendance would be less than 96 days in 2021. Using reports on rotational systems adopted across Terms in 2021, and applying the same reported patterns of discretionary early school closure for 2020 to 2021, we

[1] In South Africa, public schools are grouped into quintiles, which describe the relative wealth of the school. Quintile 5 schools are the wealthiest schools in the country, while Quintile 1 schools are the poorest. Quintile 1 – 3 schools do not charge school fees, and a large proportion of these schools participate in the National School Nutrition program where learners receive a meal at the school. These schools are legally not allowed to charge school fees, and are usually the worst performing in the system

[2] For reports on previous data collection waves visit: https://www.education.gov.za/Programmes/EarlyGradeReadingStudy.aspx

deduce that in 2021 Grade 3 learners lost on average 36 percent of school days relative to a pre-COVID-19 year. This estimate is 34 percent for Grade 7 learners.

Other causes of lost days include: early closures at the end of each term (e.g., learners were supposed to attend school until December 15, 2021, but most schools told learners to stay home after November 27), water and weather disruptions, and quarantine due to COVID-19 cases.

Learner and teacher absenteeism also contribute to lost time and continues to be an area of concern, although both groups felt they missed less days in 2021 than in 2020.

Evidence of the outcome of reduced contact time includes teacher perception that learners cannot read and write as well as the equivalent learners pre-COVID-19. When we compare the amount of work completed by learners in 2021 compared to 2018 through a workbook analysis, there is a statistically significant reduction in the amount of writing done (pages with written paragraphs and sentences).

Mitigation strategies that schools implemented include:

- Sending home more work with learners to make up the deficit. But this was not corroborated by the caregivers, who felt that the homework was more or less the same as pre-COVID-19 requirements. Teachers often indicated that they expected the learner to complete assignments in their workbooks at home. However, as noted above, there was less rather than more work completed. A quarter of caregivers (26%) said that they were distressed by the fact that they could not help their learners with homework.

- The DBE truncated the curriculum requirements, however, almost half the teachers felt that the learners would not get through this shorter curriculum. The DBE also reduced the pace at which the curriculum should be taught through the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs). Teachers reported that this has a knock-on effect that the teachers are spending a large amount of time revising the previous years' work. Thus, for example, the Grade 3 teachers spent time on the Grade 2 curriculum in 2021, meaning they are not covering Grade 3 work.

Learning environment

Schools have continued with the national school nutrition program[3]. All the 182 schools where school functionality data was collected provided food to learners in Term 3 of 2018 and 2021, and importantly the provision of lunch has increased from 76 percent in 2018 to 86 percent in 2021. This means that learners, for the most part, are receiving meals daily as expected. However, it appears from the data that there has been a decline in the extent of private nutritional programming at schools, with mid-morning snacks and breakfasts less likely to be provided in 2021 compared to 2018. However, the practice of supplementing the official lunch with breakfast and snacks sourced appears to have dropped off during COVID-19. Pre-pandemic, it appears to be five times more likely for a school to serve breakfast and offer a mid-morning snack. While lunch is served, the data

[3] The National School Nutrition Program aims to improve the health and nutritional status of the poorest learners in South Africa. It offers one nutritious meal (usually lunch) to school learners. In some instances, schools tend to supplement lunch with other meals such as breakfast or mid-morning snack through other support from the community, private sector and NGOs.

showed (when compared to 2018) that fewer vegetables are served, meaning that there is a deterioration in the composition of meals (starch, protein, and fruit or vegetables).

Observations showed that the COVID-19 protocols are being observed in most schools. Social distancing is a challenge for 68 percent of these primary schools, and only three percent (of 190 schools) did not have any handwashing facilities.

2. Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the psychosocial wellbeing of teachers, caregivers and learners to such an extent that their ability to teach/learn or support learners has changed?

Teachers and caregivers reported high degrees of psychosocial stress, which have negatively affected their ability to teach/learn. In particular, mask wearing was identified by teachers as being problematic for learners to hear or understand them when teaching.

When examining the top four concerns of teachers, caregivers and learners, just under half of the teachers (42%) and caregivers (40%) were concerned about being infected, while 29 percent of the caregivers were also concerned about dying.

Thirty percent of caregivers were concerned about their child's education, and the teachers top three concerns (other than being infected) have to do with education: "learners not being able to catch up" (37%); Learners passing (23%) and Learner drop-outs (18%) indicating that the disruption caused by COVID-19 has impacted on education.

The other main concern of caregivers is financial (29%) and mirrors the economic crisis in the country.

Learners reported that they had "no worries" (32%); inability to go to school (27%); dislike wearing masks (29%); and the inability to play with others (18%) due to social distancing.

3. What psychosocial and practical support can be provided to teachers and learners to help reduce their stress, and support their ability to teach?

Both teachers and caregivers were asked to make suggestions on support.

While almost a fifth of caregivers did not know what action the school or the DBE could take, other caregivers recommended:

- Increasing learning time (41%) through extra classes, suspending rotational schooling
- Expanding the number of teachers and more digital communication with the caregivers (22%)
- Providing material resources (16%) which includes stationery, uniforms and e-learning material

Teachers recommend:

- Workshops and training support (23%) on, for example, the curriculum
- Psychosocial support (13%), including counselling and stress management
- Better communication (5%) through meetings, school visits and teacher interaction

Based on these findings, we provide the following **recommendations** for the DBE:

1. Discontinue rotational learner attendance schedules as soon as possible
2. Minimize the loss of non-COVID-19 related teaching and learning time (for example, due to early discretionary school closures and interruptions in the water supply)
3. Ensure that foundational skills are readily taught and assessed in later grades
4. Develop an integrated strategy that prioritizes the implementation of catch-up programs
5. Develop a national remedial program to support home learning
6. Develop homework plans to support effective supervisory home-support to learners who need to complete parts of their DBE workbooks outside of school
7. Ensure that teaching and learning resources, and especially reading resources, are readily accessible to support home learning
8. Only maintain minimally disruptive COVID-19 protocols in the schools to allay the health worries of educators, teachers and caregivers. When changes to protocols are made, effectively communicate the health and educational trade-offs involved
9. Revise teaching protocols to allow teachers to teach (especially languages) without a mask as long as they are in a well-ventilated space
10. Provide training and support to teachers on the revised curriculum and adjusted annual teaching plans
11. To address COVID-19 psychosocial stress of teachers, pursue feasible and scalable strategies such as the promotion of peer-to-peer support amongst teachers
12. Launch a campaign to strongly encourage and support psychosocial check-ins at schools

INTRODUCTION

Khulisa Management Services is submitting this Consolidated Report on COVID-19 Research to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the COVID-19 study, which is conducted along with data collection and analysis for the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS), the Reading Support Project (RSP) and the Language Benchmarking study.

Early 2020 marked the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 19, 2020, in response to this pandemic, the South African government closed schools and placed the country under "lockdown". Learners only fully returned to school in August 2020, and since then, learners were only attending school on a 50 percent rotational basis.

In 2021, the academic calendar start date was delayed by two weeks (learners returned to school on February 15, 2021, instead of January 27, 2021) as a result of the second wave of COVID-19 infections, which placed the country under adjusted alert level 3 of lockdown. Schools resumed with the same rotational arrangements implemented in 2020 until the end of Term 2. Term 2 was also affected by the third wave of COVID-19 infections and the country's move to an adjusted level 4 lockdown, forcing schools to close earlier than expected and giving a four-week break to learners.

On May 28, 2021, the DBE released a new directive instructing all schools to return to daily learner attendance in Term 3 starting July 26, 2021. However, schools reopened in the midst of the third wave of COVID-19 infections, making it difficult for schools to go back to 'normal' schooling without the rotational schedule.

This report delves into the impact of COVID-19 on schools, teachers and school managers in the North West Province of South Africa.

BACKGROUND

Despite the government of South Africa's (GoSA) large investment in basic education, the country continues to face challenges in providing quality education in the majority of schools and its education indicators continue to lag behind those of its peers. In international comparative reading tests, South Africa consistently performs at the bottom, with nearly 80 percent of Grade 4 learners unable to read with comprehension in the language of their choice, including home language (Howie et al., 2016). The GoSA considers education to be one of its highest domestic priorities and one of the greatest long-term challenges facing the country, as is evident in the National Development Plan, which states its number one objective is improving the quality of basic education (DBE, 2013).

To support the GoSA, USAID/SA awarded the PERFORMANCE Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) to Khulisa Management Services (Khulisa) to provide technical, analytical, advisory, monitoring, evaluation and related support services to assist USAID/SA in **effectively diagnosing needs, and planning, designing, monitoring, evaluating and learning from interventions.** PERFORMANCE helps to fill a critical research gap by providing rigorous analysis in target areas related to improving the quality of language and literacy skills of primary Grade learners in South Africa and the region. Task Order 4 under PERFORMANCE has 12 objectives, two of which relate to COVID-19 Research. These are:

- **Objective 4** - Create COVID-19 evaluation questions and/or tool in close collaboration with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and USAID; and

- **Objective 12** - Analyze COVID-19 research data and produce a final consolidated report on COVID-19 research.

AIM OF THE COVID-19 RESEARCH

South Africa first introduced COVID-19 lockdown restrictions at the end of March 2020, and for the remainder of 2020 and 2021, most learners attended school on a rotational basis with a large amount of coursework still expected to be done at home.

Learners in the Foundation Phase of education (Grades R-3) returned to school in August 2020, after missing three to four months of "in person" schooling since the start of COVID-19. After returning to school, teaching and learning continued to be affected by the implementation of rotational time tabling. In August 2021, primary school learners (Grades R – 7) were expected to return to school full-time in more than a year.

Three different studies on early-grade reading from no-fee schools across South Africa show that in 2020, grade-2 learners lost between 57 percent and 70 percent of a year of learning, and Grade 4s between 62 percent and 81 percent (Ardington et al., 2021).

While lost time is a severe threat to the attainment of educational outcomes, this research also explores whether the psychosocial impacts of COVID-19 affected the degree to which teachers can teach, learners can learn, and caregivers can support learners. The three central evaluation questions are:

- **How much has teaching and learning been disrupted due to COVID-19?**
- **Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the psychosocial well-being of teachers, caregivers, and learners to such an extent that their ability to teach/learn or support learners has changed?**
- **What psychosocial and practical support can be provided to teachers and learners to help reduce their stress, and support their ability to teach?**

The following section of this report briefly explores the literature which frames the evaluation questions and establishes the appropriate sub-questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) provides an approach for exploring the effects of the COVID-19 school disruptions on individuals and their functioning within the school. The theory broadly explores how the layers of environment form a larger ecosystem and impact directly on a person's actions. All layers of this ecosystem have been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly at a microsystem (e.g., school) level. These effects are felt deeply by the educators, caregivers and children involved. A principal's or teacher's individual well-being may affect their ability to provide early grade reading (EGR) teaching and learning activities in the school setting upon

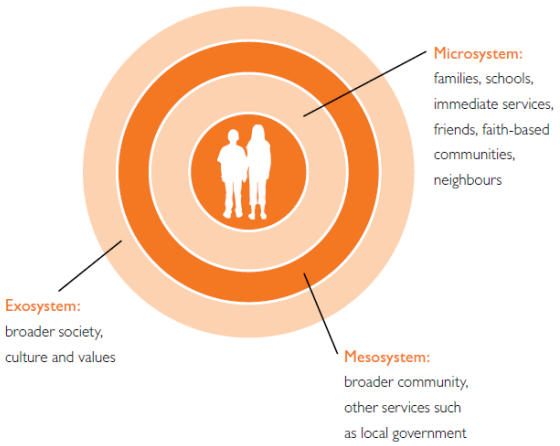


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner Ecological System's Theory

reopening, as well as during the school closure period when learning was expected to take place in the home setting. The well-being and ability of caregivers to provide support to learning activities during the school closure time may influence learner outcomes, and similarly, learners' well-being may affect their ability to learn.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL DISRUPTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted schooling considerably. The first most obvious disruption is to teaching time. In 2020, learners did not attend school for a period of four to five months. Schools resumed from July 2020 in a staggered form, by August 2020 school had resumed for all learners, but most learners were still only attending schools on a 50 percent rotational basis to allow for adequate social distancing to be implemented. Loss of in-person teaching time may also have occurred due to teacher absenteeism, learner absenteeism, and additional closures when a positive COVID-19 case was reported at school. Protocols for screening learners and staff before they enter schools may have caused delays to the start of the school day.

However, the COVID-19 disruption in schools involved more than the loss of teaching time. Without any training or extra resources, educators were expected to facilitate learning at home during the lockdown. When rotational attendance was introduced, teachers were expected to provide work for learners to do at home on the days that they were not attending school.

Standard operating procedures introduced by the DBE required substantial changes to school routines and behaviors of individuals: Regulations required schools to arrange classrooms differently; mask-wearing and hand sanitizing became part of the school day; routines such as receiving learners were changed. After-school activities and sport were halted. Social interaction among teachers and among learners was reduced to allow for social distancing and to reduce the likelihood of workplace transmissions. All these changes have placed enormous demands on teachers.

In addition to the loss in teaching time, the alteration of school routines and changes in social interactions, changes to the curriculum were also implemented. The Curriculum was "trimmed" by the DBE, and Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) relaxed the pacing requirements. At the Foundation Phase, the DBE suggested that schools spend more time on core concepts in Mathematics, Home Language (HL) and English First Additional Language (EFAL). They were guided to reduce the time spent on Life Orientation. However, decisions on which topics to include or exclude were devolved to teachers - introducing the risk that curriculum implementation would be widely variable (Hoadley, 2020).

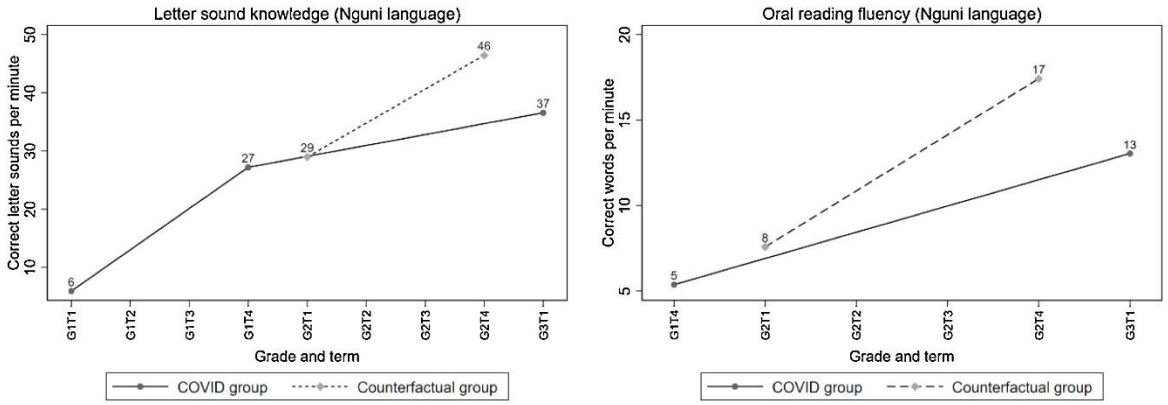
The delivery of curriculum may also have been affected where teachers were reassigned to teach other grades and subjects than normal, to fill in for colleagues that were working from home due to comorbidities.

Three different studies on early-grade reading from no-fee schools across South Africa show that in 2020, Grade 2 learners lost between 57 percent and 70 percent of a year of learning, and Grade 4s between 62 percent and 81 percent (Ardington et al., 2021). These estimates reflect losses in letter-sound knowledge and word reading in Setswana and word reading in English. There is also evidence from the Grade 4 sample that girls and those with stronger initial reading proficiency have been most negatively affected.

There is little existing evidence on how schooling has been affected in higher grades or across the entire spectrum of schools, including no-fee and wealthier fee-paying schools. However, simulations

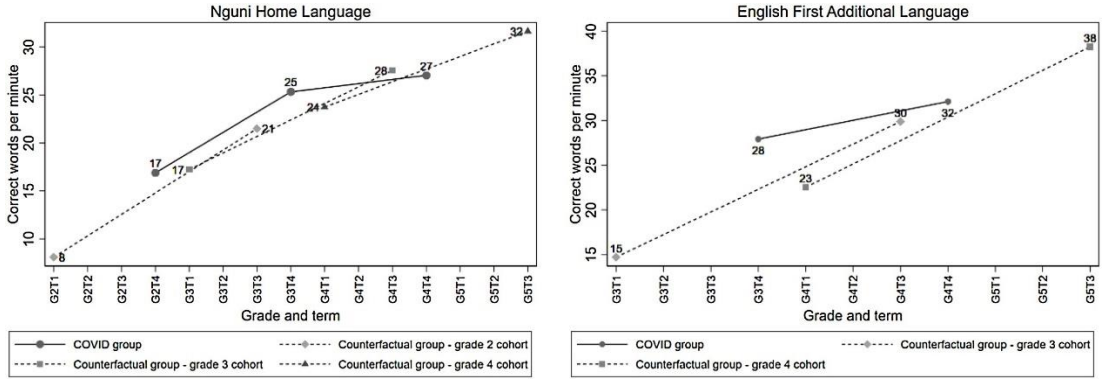
by Gustafsson and Nuga-Deliwe (2020) predict below-expected Grade 12 outcomes lasting until at least 2022, and possibly as far as 2031 if there is no successful catch-up strategy. However, since these initial modelling exercises, it has become evident that school disruptions have been longer than initially expected, extending well beyond 2020.

Figure 2: Grade 2 learning gains – COVID-19 Group versus Counterfactual



Source: Ardington et al., 2021

Figure 3: Grade 4 learning gains by grade – EGRS I COVID-19 group versus Counterfactual



Source: Ardington et al., 2021

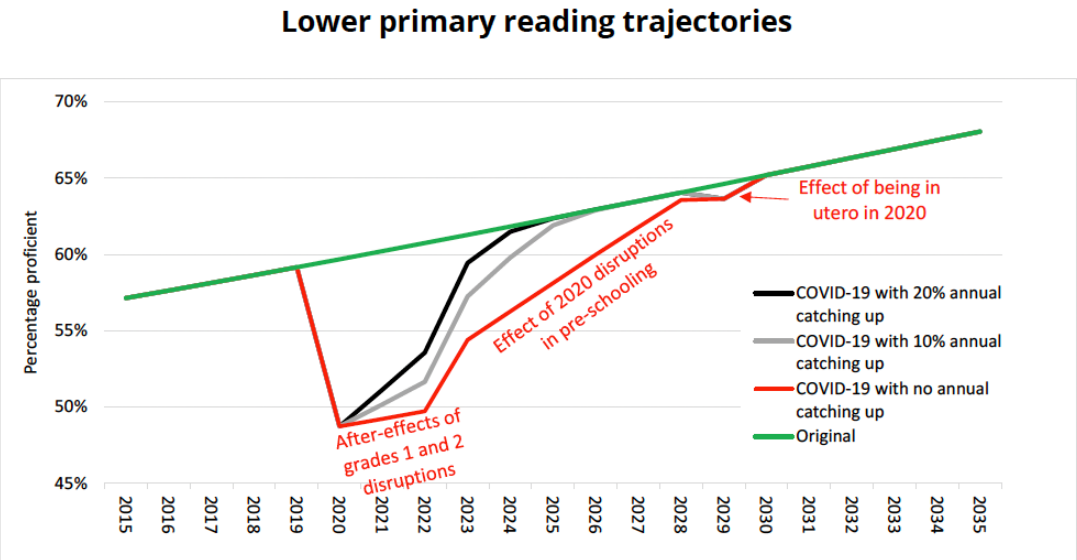
Disruptions to schooling have also significantly affected learner attendance. Attendance rates amongst 7 to 17-year-olds were expected to be 4-5 percentage points lower in the first half of 2021 than in pre-pandemic times. This implies a tripling of the number of school-going-aged learners outside of the basic schooling system at the start of 2021 (Shepherd et al., 2021).

A survey of their members by the South African Democratic Teacher Union (SADTU) revealed that two-thirds of teachers surveyed had little (13%) or no communication (51%) with their learners during school closures (SADTU, 2021). Access to remote learning is heavily influenced by household access to technology. The 2018 General Household Survey estimated that 22 percent of households had access to a computer and only 10 percent had internet access (Stats SA, 2019 in Soudien et al., 2021). Spaull and Van der Berg (2020: 8), based on a survey they conducted, found that while 90 percent of South African households reported having access to a mobile phone, only 60 percent reported having access to the internet via their mobile phone.

WHAT EFFECT HAS COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS HAD ON PERFORMANCE IN 2020?

A study by Gustafsson (2021) models the trajectories of early reading globally, showing significant long-term effects on reading proficiency, particularly in low and middle-income countries (see Figure below). The model considers differences in learning trajectories across the world, assuming that countries performing poorly globally do so because the amount of learning occurring between one grade and the next is lower, and that learning losses are coupled with worsening inequality.

Figure 4: Lower primary trajectories of learning



Source: Gustafsson (2021).

DEFINING "PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING"

The adjustment to new practices, the uncertainty around the schooling calendar, fear of getting infected and the loss of social support have left many people more anxious that normal. It is expected that the changes in schools, together with additional stresses such as illness and loss of income in households, may have affected learners, caregivers / guardians and educators' psychosocial well-being to such an extent that their ability to teach, support and learn may have been adversely affected (UNESCO, 2020).

This study focuses on psychosocial well-being rather than only on the social-emotional effects of the COVID-19 school disruptions. This choice is based on the understanding that a psychosocial approach recognizes that individuals live within and are influenced by their context. There is a dynamic interplay between the psychological and social worlds in which individuals exist (USAID, Thogomelo Project, 2010). The ability of individuals to function - adapt and to "self-manage" (Huber et al., 2011) - within this dynamic context is important. A socio-ecological framework helps illustrate the dynamic context of an individual within their micro-, meso- and exo-system (see Figure 1).

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that well-being can be simply described as "judging life positively and feeling good" and can also provide a common metric that helps compare the effects of policies or, in this case, the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and their ability to

function.[4] Measuring well-being is subjective and relies on self-reporting, and a number of existing measures are available. Psychosocial refers to the dynamic relationship between internal psychological and external social processes. This interaction generates a state of psychosocial well-being when it leads to self-esteem, self-respect, and self-reliance (psychological processes), the mental health to function to a person's fullest capacity and cope with normal stress (a psychological state) and the ability to engage in meaningful and effective relationships with others – including public institutions (a social process) (Attah et al., 2016).

The role of schools in children's lives has long been documented and researched. "Schooling does matter greatly. Moreover, the benefits can be surprisingly long lasting" (Rutter, 1991). It is crucial to appreciate that these long-term benefits rely on both effects on cognitive performance (in terms of learning specific skills, improved task orientation, and better persistence) and self-esteem and self-efficacy (with respect to better attitudes to learning, raised caregiver expectations, and more positive teacher responses because the children are more rewarding to teach). In some circumstances, positive school experiences of both academic and non-academic kinds can have a protective effect on children under stress and living otherwise unrewarding lives. These last points remind us once again that school provides a set of social experiences for children and a place for scholastic learning, and that effective schools have both aspects of children's lives as part of their goals (Rutter, 1991).

There is also a growing body of literature that establishes the links between learners' social-emotional functioning and their academic success and show that interventions focused on improving social-emotional functioning are linked to academic gains (Suldo et al., 2013). Psychosocial well-being is a key concern for our care and the development of young people (McLaughlin, 2018). During COVID-19, the social lives of children have changed and their sense of belonging, which has long been identified as having an impact on academic, psychological, and social outcomes, are likely to have been affected (Allen et al., 2018).

The home environment and caregiver-child relationships also play an important role to support academic achievements (Chohan & Qadir, 2013; Thida, De Gruiter & Kuppens, 2020). Thus, understanding how caregivers have been impacted by COVID-19 is an important aspect of this research. Exploring how caregivers have engaged with learning in the home during lockdown is important as caregiver involvement has been found to have a positive impact on learning outcomes (Harris & Goodall, 2008). The relationship between learners and teachers and the impact on learning outcomes is also well documented. Research has shown that positive, supportive teacher-learner relationships are linked to fostering desirable socio-emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2006; White & Kern, 2018), and protecting children at risk for school failure (Ladd & Price, 1987). Therefore, teachers' psychosocial well-being is also central to learning outcomes, and this research explores both teachers' psychosocial well-being and their engagement with caregivers.

For the purposes of this study, the following dimensions of psychosocial well-being were explored:

- Emotional: emotions, feelings and internal reactions to COVID-19 and changed school or home context
- Cognitive: Psychological or mental thoughts

[4] https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm

- Social: extent and quality of relationships and social interactions within the school context (principal – teacher – caregiver)

- Behavioral motivation/Functionality: flexibility to deal with changed teaching and learning practice

These dimensions have also been explored within a specific time context: the period during COVID-19 school closures (March to August 2020), when schools re-opened and provided schooling between September and December of 2020, when the start of the school year was delayed in January 2021, and when schools were able to discontinue rotation if they met social distancing guidelines in September and October of 2021.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To mitigate the effects of COVID-19 school disruptions in the future, it is critical to gather insights from principals, teachers and caregivers on how teaching and learning can be supported and how any learning losses (days lost and lower than expected learner outcomes) can be addressed. This research is designed to investigate how COVID-19 affected: schooling (loss of school days, relationships, and management); curriculum delivery (planned versus amended versus actual); teaching and learning performance; the extent of alternative provisions/learning at home; and the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 on individuals' emotions, thoughts, relationships, and ability to function (within the context of teaching and learning). Thus, the full set of evaluation questions and sub-questions include:

Table 1: COVID-19 Research Questions

1. How much has teaching and learning been disrupted due to COVID-19?
1.1 How much contact time did learners lose due to the COVID-19 school disruptions in 2020? 1.2 What response was implemented by schools, teachers and caregivers to support learning during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed? 1.3 How much non-contact teaching did schools and teachers deliver during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed? 1.4 How much non-contact learning did learners do during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed? 1.5 Which modalities were most feasible to facilitate non-contact learning during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed? 1.6 To what extent did teachers cover the standard and trimmed EGR curriculum covered for the 2020 academic year, and how does this compare to business as usual? 1.7 What effect has the COVID-19 school disruptions had on early Grade reading learner performance in 2020?
2. Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the psychosocial well-being of teachers, caregivers and learners to such an extent that their ability to teach/learn or support learners has changed?
2.1 What about the COVID-19 pandemic worries teachers, caregivers and learners most? 2.2. What is the level of stress experienced by teachers, caregivers and learners due to COVID-19 pandemic? 2.3 Did teachers, caregivers and school principals feel supported to deal with the stress caused by the COVID-19 disruptions to school? 2.4 Has the level of stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affected the ability of schools, teachers and learners to teach / learn?

3. What psychosocial and practical support can be provided to teachers and learners to help reduce their stress, and support their ability to teach?
3.1 What kind of psychological or practical support will help to reduce their COVID-19 related stress?
3.2 What kind of psychological or practical support do schools feel most able to provide?

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

In identifying the implications and impacts of COVID-19 on learners, teachers and school environments, this report draws on three related but distinct data collection activities conducted over a period from January 2021 to November 2021. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from teachers, School Management Team (SMT) members, parents/caregivers and learners.

The first set of data derives from the administration of contextual tools to principals, Grade 3 and 7 teachers, Foundation Phase[5] Head of Departments (HODs), caregivers and learners from 229 EGRS I[6] schools in two districts in the North West Province (of which a subsample of 214 were Reading Support Project schools). Fifteen of the sample schools were only EGRS I schools, which meant that they did not participate in the RSP, and therefore, the only contextual data required was from Grade 7 teachers (since they had participated in the EGRS I). All schools are quintile 1-3 schools[7] and were visited in Term 3, 2021, between September 7 and 30 2021. In addition, fieldworkers completed school functionality and classroom observation assessments in these schools.

The second data source comes from Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) surveys conducted with educators and caregivers of learners in these EGRS I schools. The educator telephonic survey was conducted with 439 teachers and SMT members from 197 schools in the period between January 22 to 30, 2021, and the parent/caregiver survey was conducted in October 2021 with 1,925 caregivers of Grade 3, 4 and 7 learners.

The third data source is based on key informant interviews conducted with district officials in March 2021.

For a detailed explanation of the approach and methodology, refer to Appendix 1.

SAMPLE

The target sample was 229 schools, and the team successfully collected data from 225 schools.[8] This is part of a longitudinal study, and the sample was prescribed by the DBE. These are low income schools based in both urban and rural settings. They are referred to as "no fee" schools as they are not allowed to charge school fees and cater to low income families.

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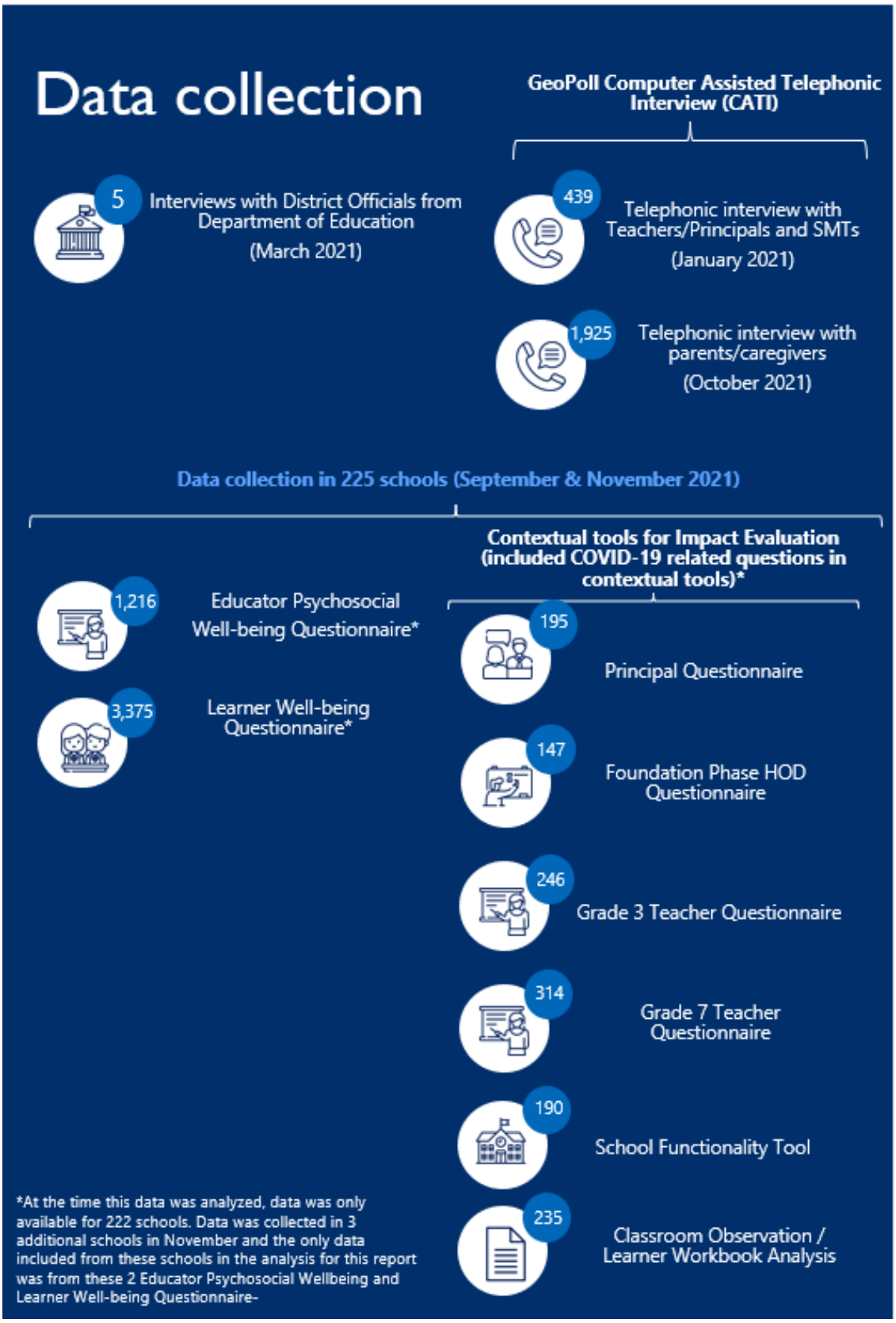
[5] "Foundation Phase" refers to the phase of early Grade schooling from Grade R (similar to Kindergarten) and Grades 1 to 3.
[6] This is the fifth wave of data collection with the EGRS I schools, allowing comparison over time.
[7] See explanation of South African schools organized in quintiles in the Executive Summary.
[8] The team was unable to visit four schools as: two schools had uncooperative principals that would not allow data collection to take place at the school (even with DBE intervention), one school had closed down and in its place there was a pig farm, and one school was closed during fieldwork due to a COVID-19 case and when the team returned to the school on the rescheduled date there was no municipal water supply and all learners had been sent home.

Figure 5 below depicts the instruments used in the research, as well as the number of completed instruments received.

Figure 5: COVID-19 Data Collection Instruments and Response Rate



INSTRUMENT DESIGN

Khulisa, together with the DBE and USAID, refined the research questions proposed in the Study Protocol and Methodology plan and then set out to craft instrument questions that could respond to each of the three COVID-19 research questions, and the sub-questions. The CATI survey instruments, the contextual tools and the key informant interviews were piloted in contexts similar to those in which the data would be collected and, where necessary, were subsequently adapted.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection began in January 2021, with a CATI survey conducted with teachers/principals and SMT members. Altogether 107 unique SMT members and 332 unique teachers from 197 schools were reached with this survey. In March 2021, Khulisa researchers conducted interviews with five education officials from the North West Department of Education. Using a set of contextual tools, the evaluation team collected other COVID-19 related data during school visits conducted between September 7 and 30, 2021.[9] The final number of instruments collected is depicted in Figure 5. Lastly, a CATI parent/caregiver survey collected data from 1,925 parents from 191 North West schools in October 2021.

For both the GeoPoll CATI surveys and instruments administered in schools, fieldworkers and enumerators were extensively trained on how to administer the instruments and on psychosocial distress protocols to better prepare for the surveys' sensitive contents.

SUMMARY OF TOOLS COLLECTED

Of the 225 schools, Table 2 shows how many tools were collected by the number of schools. The maximum number of potential tools was nine, which was collected in 60 schools. In many cases, the respondent was not present (e.g., the Principal), or the school did not have the appropriate grades attending on that day, and therefore the tools could not be collected.

Table 2: Tools collected per School

Number of Schools	60	75	45	20	8	7	6	2	2
Number of tools collected	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

DATA ANALYSIS

The team analyzed quantitative data through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using STATA v14. Where appropriate, the team disaggregated results by age, gender, role, grade and district to explore between-group differences.

The team analyzed open-ended questions and qualitative data sets with a thematic analysis approach.

[9] An additional three schools that could not be visited during the planned fieldwork were visited from November 24 to 26 2022, but the only contextual data from these schools included in this report was the learner well-being and educator well-being surveys.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

TEACHING AND LEARNING DISRUPTIONS DUE TO COVID-19

Question 1: How much has teaching and learning been disrupted due to COVID-19?

1.1 How much contact time did learners lose due to the COVID-19 school disruptions in 2020?

1.2 What response was implemented by schools, teachers and caregivers to support learning during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed?

1.3 How much non-contact teaching did schools and teachers deliver during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed?

1.4 How much non-contact learning did learners do during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed?

1.5 Which modalities were most feasible to facilitate non-contact learning during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed?

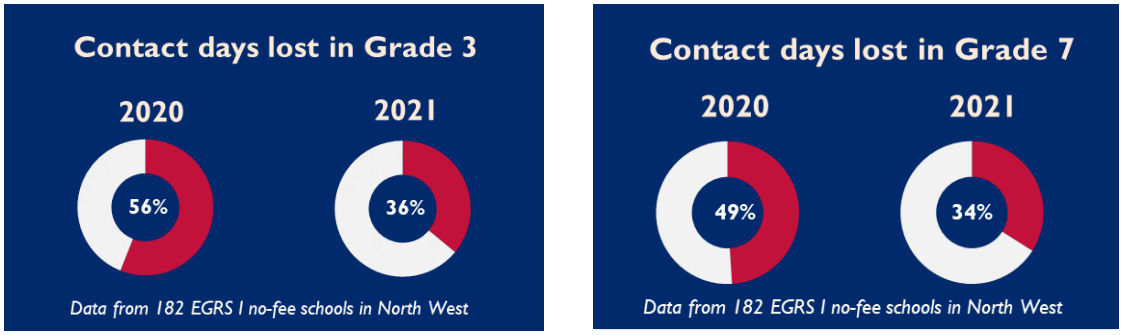
1.6 To what extent did teachers cover the standard and trimmed EGR curriculum covered for the 2020 academic year, and how does this compare to business as usual?

1.7 What effect has the COVID-19 school disruptions had on early grade reading learner performance in 2020?

LOST DAYS OF SCHOOLING IN 2020 AND 2021

Lost contact teaching time due to COVID-19 disruptions, along with imposed regulations around social distancing, has cost children dearly in terms of available time at school and learning opportunities. **Relative to a pre-COVID-19 year, Grade 3 learners in North West no-fee schools lost, on average, 56 percent of contact school days in 2020 while Grade 7 learners lost, on average, 49 percent of contact school days.** This matches earlier findings by Ardington, Wills and Kotze (2021) state that as much as 56-60 percent of available contact teaching days were lost in no-fee schools in 2020 for Grades 2 and 4 learners in the South African Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces.

Figure 6: Contact Days Lost in 2020 versus 2021



Schooling days are lost due to:

1. Official school closures due to COVID-19
2. Rotational systems of attendance scheduling; In Term 4 of 2020, about 76-86 percent of no-fee EGRS I schools, for which we have information on scheduling, were on a rotational system. This typically halves available days of schooling for children
3. Utility issues (e.g., closing the school due to lack of water) occurred during fieldwork, preventing access to at least one school
4. Severe weather closures
5. Discretionary school decisions to close earlier than official school closure dates

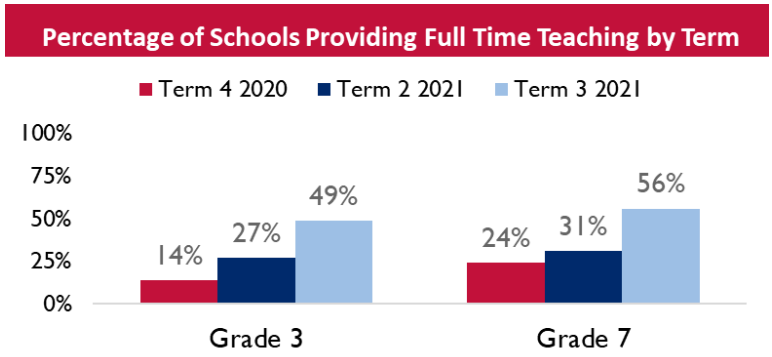
According to the government regulations, learners are supposed to attend approximately 190 days of school annually. However, regulations also require that schools hold exams and submit marks in advance of the end of each term. Then, with few exceptions, schools tell their learners to stay home as marks have been submitted. Thus, according to the EGRS I Wave 5 data, of 182 EGRS I schools, for which we have reported information from the principal on the last date of teaching and learning, three quarters closed well before the official last day of school, Friday, December 15, 2020. Nearly a quarter (24%) closed at least three weeks earlier on or before November 27, 2020.

LOST DAYS OF SCHOOLING IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC (2021)

Despite the delayed start of the 2021 school year in South Africa (delayed from January 27 to February 15) due to the second wave of COVID-19 infections, the 192 official days of schooling scheduled in 2021 was similar to the 199 days in the pre-COVID-19 2019. However, the continued use of rotational systems in the second year of the pandemic has had dramatic implications for schooling and children's learning opportunities.

With the relaxing of social distancing restrictions in schools from 1.5 meters to one meter, Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga, announced that on July 26, 2021, all primary school learners (Grades R to 7) would attend school daily. While there has been a gradual improvement in the proportion of schools in the North West no-fee sample that have returned to normal daily attendance scheduling, the rotational system remains widely used across primary schools. As identified in school functionality assessments of 190 EGRS Wave 5 schools, only 40 percent of schools were applying a daily attendance schedule in Term 3 of 2021 (i.e., 60% were still on a rotational system). Using data from caregiver, principal or Foundation Phase HOD questionnaires, we deduce that of 218 no-fee EGRS Wave 5 schools, 44 percent still applied a rotational attendance schedule in Term 3, 2021**.** Similar patterns are observed in no-fee schools in Limpopo province in Term 3, 2021 (Ardington & Henry, 2021). **In other words, 18 months after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, contact teaching time is still compromised by rotational systems in almost half North West Province no-fee schools.** We also find some evidence that rotational schedules are slightly more likely to be applied for Grade 3 learners than Grade 7 learners, even though in 2020 Grade 3 learners lost more official school days than Grade 7 learners.

Figure 7: Percentage of Schools Providing full time teaching by Grade



Source: Grade 3 HODs in 130 schools, Grade 7 data from 160 principals in 160 schools

Using reports on rotational systems adopted across Terms in 2021, and applying the same reported patterns of discretionary early school closure for 2020 to the current year, we deduce that in **2021 Grade 3 learners lost on average 36 percent of school days** relative to a pre-COVID-19 year. **This estimate is 34 percent for Grade 7 learners.**

LOST OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN IN TERM 3 OF 2021

What do school rotational systems mean for hours of available schooling for Grades 3 and 7?

If learners attend school on alternative days or a 'one-week on one-week off' basis, potential learning time is halved. However, some schools could extend or adjust the school day in lieu of disruptions to learning. Unfortunately, we found little evidence of this type of compensation. **Grade 3 learners in schools on a rotational system access a maximum of 30 hours of school time over 2-weeks,** compared to 60 hours of school time where normal daily attendance schedules are adopted. **For Grade 7 learners,** comparative estimates of opportunity time for schooling over a 2-week period are **32 hours where rotational systems are adopted, compared to 64 hours where schools have returned to normal daily attendance.**

LEARNER AND TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN A PANDEMIC PERIOD

Is learner absenteeism worse now compared to before COVID-19?

Many SMT members perceive that learner absenteeism - expressed as learners being absent on the days they are scheduled to be at school – has deteriorated compared to before COVID-19. In 63 percent of 147 schools for which there is data on this question, SMT members said learner absenteeism was worse now compared to before COVID-19. However, in a further 23 percent of the 147 schools, learners are reported to be absent less often.

While learner absenteeism may be worse now compared to before COVID-19, between Term 2 and 3 of 2021, absenteeism had reduced. This improvement in learner absenteeism is not just due to more schools shifting from rotational systems to normal daily attendance. Self-reported absenteeism, as reflected in responses from 3,129 learners in 215 schools, indicates that relative to the days they were meant to be at school, 16 percent missed many school days in 2021, with no evidence of higher absenteeism in schools on rotational systems in Term 3 of 2021. T**he main reasons reported for being absent in 2021 were sickness (44%), followed by fear of getting COVID-19 (28%).**

Is teacher absenteeism worse now compared to before COVID-19?

In comparison to perceptions of changes in learner absenteeism, SMT members are much more likely to indicate that teacher absenteeism has improved now compared to before COVID-19, with nearly half (48%) saying that teachers are absent less often, while a further 17 percent say teacher absenteeism has stayed the same. In just less than a third of 147 schools (32%), teacher absenteeism is perceived to have gotten worse (absent a 'lot more' or absent a 'little more').

EFFORTS TO SUPPORT LEARNING DURING AND AFTER LOCKDOWN

Online classes were not a feasible option for supporting non-contact learning either during lockdown or after schooling resumed. In the *Preliminary Report on COVID-19 Research* (Bisgard et al., 2021), teacher and SMT responses from 194 schools indicated that the use of online or virtual teaching during school closures was used in just 8 percent of the schools.

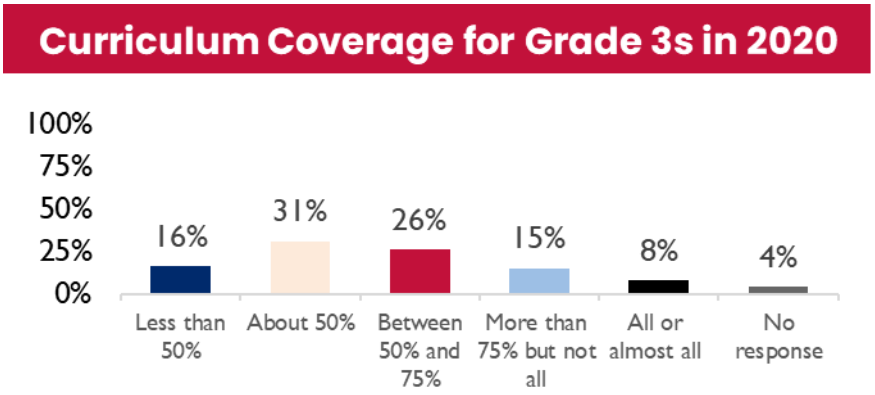
Instead, the most common strategy for supporting learning during the lockdown period and after schooling resumed was "to send work home with learners". **DBE workbooks were the most common resource used to support non-contact learning among Foundation Phase teachers, while Grade 7 teachers most used textbooks to support learning at home**. Responses from caregiver surveys indicate that the most common way for caregivers to support learning at home was to help their children with their schoolwork. **Of 1,925 caregiver responses, 61 percent indicated that they themselves helped their children to do the schoolwork they were given, but 21 percent said they asked older siblings to help.** When asked about the challenges faced in supporting their children's learning at home, about a quarter reported that they faced no challenges (27%), while another **quarter indicated that the work was too difficult or confusing them to help their children with the work.**

CURRICULUM COVERAGE

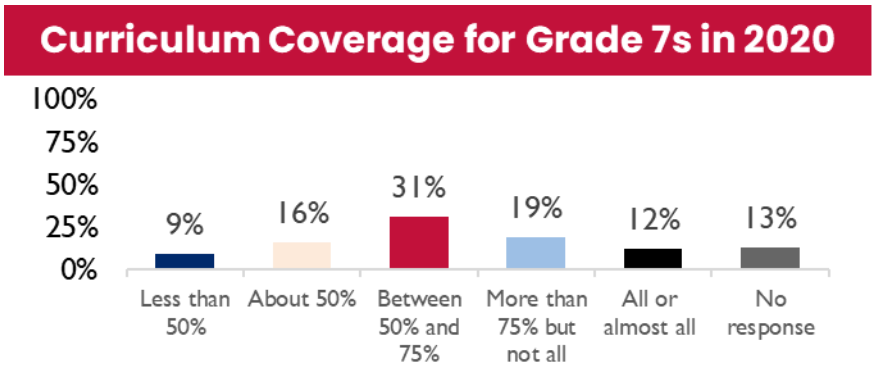
Lost school days resulting from school closures during 2020 and ongoing rotational timetabling during 2021 meant that much of the curriculum was not covered during these two years. The most common reported approach to 'catching-up' on lost teaching time was to provide extra work or homework to children. Of 314 Grade 7 teachers surveyed across 188 schools, 57 percent indicated that this was their approach, while 28 percent were providing extra classes before or after school. By comparison, in Limpopo province no-fee schools, it has been more common to provide "Extra classes before/ after school or on weekends" (Ardington & Henry 2021:26).

During EGRS I Wave 5 fieldwork visits in Term 3 of 2021, most Grade 3 teachers (80%) and Grade 7 teachers (78%) surveyed indicated that they had managed to cover at least half of the curriculum they would normally cover in a year. Just 12 percent of Grade 7 teachers and 8 percent of Grade 3 teachers said they had managed to cover almost all or all of the curriculum. Looking at the distribution of responses, Grade 7 teachers were more confident about the extent of curriculum they were able to cover which is expected given that Grade 7 learners had more schooling days than Grades 3 learners in 2020. Responses from the same group of teachers surveyed in Grade 3 and 7 indicate that 59 percent of Grade 3 and 51 percent of Grade 7 teachers sent work home that was then done by learners (either fully or partially) during 2021.

Figure 8: Grades 3 and 7 Curriculum Coverage in 2020



Data from 182 Grade 3 teachers in 142 schools



Data from 313 Grade 7 teachers in 188 schools

Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Data from Grade 3 and Grade 7 teachers

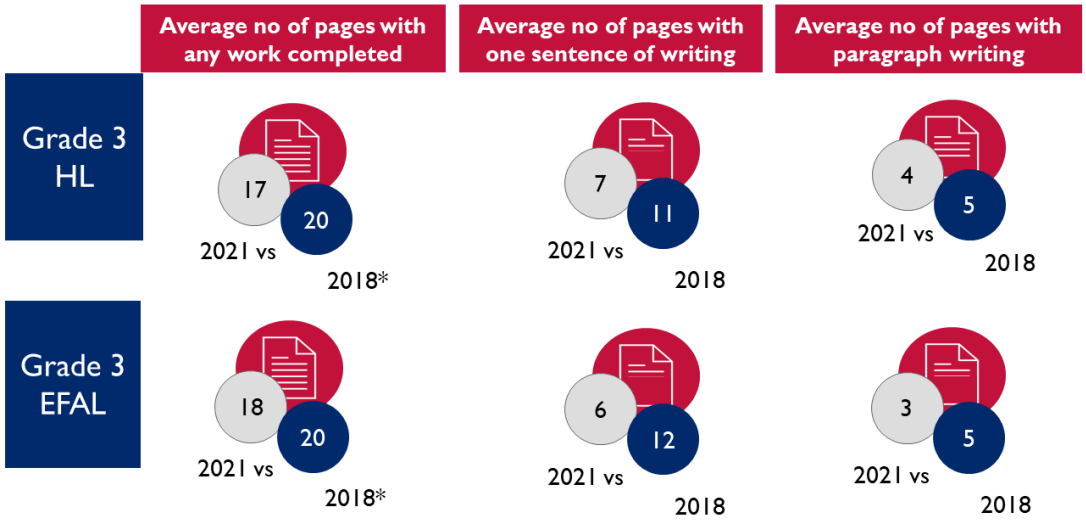
In addition to lost teaching time, teachers reported that they struggled to cover the curriculum due to spending more time revising previous topics during class. Of 309 Grade 7 teachers from 187 schools, 62 percent indicated that they were spending more time revising previous work with their learners. This constitutes evidence of the additional cost of lost teaching time, namely that learners forget what was previously taught, resulting in teachers having to spend more time on revision in class and even less time covering new topics.

WORKBOOK COVERAGE

An objective measure of curriculum coverage and opportunity to learn is evidence of completing pages of the DBE workbooks. In Terms 3 of 2018 and 2021, workbooks of Grade 3 teachers' best learners were assessed at similar points in the Term, so that year-on-year comparable outcomes of pages of DBE workbook coverage are identifiable for between 122 (Wave 4) and 132 (Wave 5) EGRS I schools.

Since the beginning of Term 3, the average number of pages of coverage in DBE workbooks declined from 20 to 17 in HL, and from 20 to 18 in EFAL (although these differences are not statistically significantly different). There was evidence of a significant decline in writing of at least one full sentence from 11 to 7 pages in home language, and a halving of coverage from 12 to 6 pages in EFAL workbooks. Pages of paragraph writing in EFAL workbooks significantly declined from 5 pages in 2018 to 3 pages in 2021.

Figure 9: Comparing EGRS I Wave 4 & 5, Exercise Book Analysis for 122-132 Schools



*Difference was not statistically significant

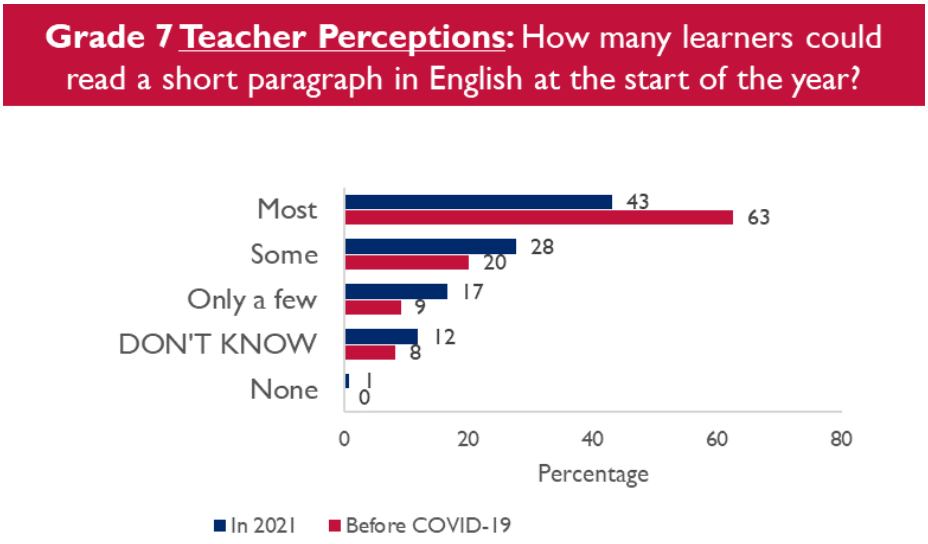
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF HOW LEARNING HAS BEEN AFFECTED

While it was impossible to measure learner performance through caregiver and teacher questionnaires, teachers' responses to survey questions about their learners' performance indicate that **teachers had noticed a decline in reading performance due to COVID-19**.

Most Grade 7 teachers surveyed indicated that their learners were behind where they should be in their Setswana HL reading. The 253 Grade 7 teachers in 173 schools had also noticed a difference in the English reading abilities of their Grade 7 learners in 2021, with 43 percent indicating that "most" learners could read a short paragraph in English at the start of the year – compared with 63 percent of learners before COVID-19.

Together, 75 percent of Grade 7 teachers surveyed in Term 3 of EGRS I fieldwork indicated that "more than half, but not all", or "most" Grade 7 learners that they currently teach would be able to keep pace with the curriculum. By contrast, a quarter indicated that less than half would be able to keep pace with the curriculum in 2021.

Figure 10: Grade 7 Teacher Perceptions of How Children Read English

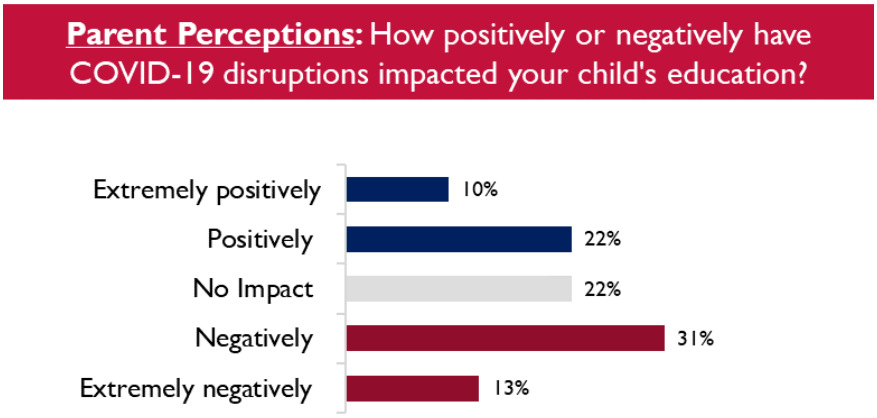


Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 253 Grade 7 teachers in 173 schools. Single response option.

CAREGIVERS PERCEPTIONS OF COVID-19 EFFECTS ON THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In terms of the overall impact that COVID-19 had on children's education, 44 percent of 1,925 caregivers from 191 schools indicated that their children's education had been impacted negatively or very negatively. However, not all caregivers believe children were negatively impacted. Interestingly, a further third of caregivers indicated that COVID-19 had had a "positive" or "extremely positive" impact on their children's education. This sub-group of caregivers was looked at in more detail and found to be less likely to identify factors that worry their children and, as such, less connected to what is happening to their children. The most significant change observed by caregivers, even more so than perceived changes in learning, is that their children's hygiene practices have improved.

Figure 11: Caregiver Perceptions of how COVID-19 has impacted their child's education



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. Responses from 1,925 caregivers from 191 schools. Single response option

Caregivers were concerned, even more so than reporting on reduced learning in schools, by their limited ability to help their children with their school work. When asked, "In your opinion, in what ways has COVID-19 affected your child(ren)'s learning/education?", **the most common response by 26 percent of 1,925 caregivers was that "I cannot assist with homework, so they cannot understand the work"**.

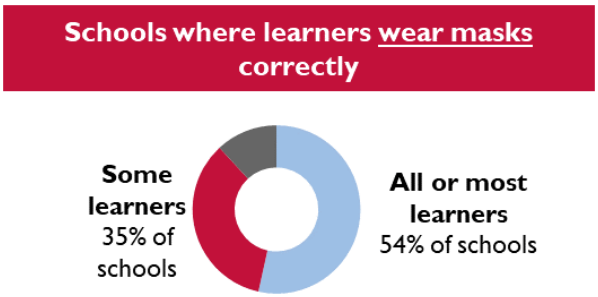
SCHOOL FEEDING

The government provides a meal to learners in all no-fee schools in the form of one lunch meal per day. Across waves 4 (2018) and 5 (2021) of EGRS I data collection, a school functionality tool was administered with identical questions on school feeding at 182 schools. All the 182 schools provided food to learners in Term 3 of 2018 and 2021 and importantly the provision of lunch has increased from 76 percent in 2018 to 86 percent in 2021. However, it appears from the data that there has been a decline in the extent of private nutritional programming at schools with mid-morning snacks, and breakfasts less likely to be provided in 2021 compared to 2018. This includes a fivefold decline in the likelihood that schools provide breakfast, and a 13-fold decline in the likelihood that they provide a mid-morning snack. Schools are significantly less likely to provide fruits (100% down to 85%), and slightly less likely to provide vegetables (100% down to 95%) to learners in 2021 compared to in 2018.

FOLLOWING COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

Mask-wearing in EGRS I schools remained commonplace in Term 3, 2021. Fieldworker observations from 190 schools indicate that in 54 percent of these schools, masks were worn correctly by almost all or all learners, while in a further 35 percent, masks were worn correctly by some but not all learners. **But mask-wearing by teachers in the classroom is constraining learners' ability to hear what is being taught. As many as one in five (20%) Grade 3 teachers surveyed said most learners could not hear them well when wearing a mask while teaching.**

Figure 12: Percent of schools where learners wear masks correctly



Source: School functionality questionnaire, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: 190 fieldworker observations from 190 schools.

Overall, social distancing is being maintained in classrooms in the sample of EGRS I schools. Social distancing at play time, however, is more problematic in schools. In addition, fieldworker observations in 190 schools suggest that in 97 percent of the schools visited, there is evidence of hand-washing facilities.

Schools with adequate handwashing facilities

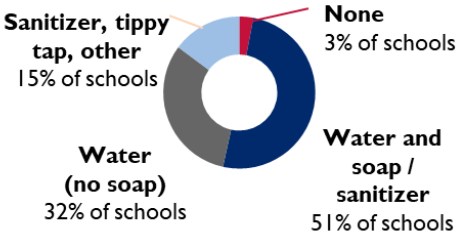


Figure 14: Schools with adequate handwashing facilities

Source: School functionality questionnaire, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: 190 fieldworker observations from 190 schools.

Schools where learners maintain social distancing in the classroom

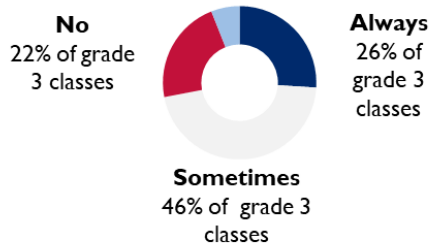


Figure 13: Learner adherence to social distancing in the classroom

Source: Grade 3 teacher questionnaire EGRS I Wave 5. Note: 245 Grade 3 teachers from 173 schools

PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Question 2: Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the psychosocial well-being of teachers, parents and learners to such an extent that their ability to teach/learn or support learners has changed

2.1 What about the COVID-19 pandemic worries teachers, caregivers and learners most?

2.2. What is the level of stress experienced by teachers, caregivers and learners due to COVID-19 pandemic?

2.3 Did teachers, caregivers and school principals feel supported to deal with the stress caused by the COVID-19 disruptions to school?

2.4 Has the level of stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affected the ability of schools, teachers and learners to teach / learn?

COVID-19 CONCERNS OF LEARNERS, CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS

Of 1,925 caregivers surveyed telephonically in October 2021, their concern over their children's education was almost as significant as their concerns about health during the pandemic. Thirty-six percent of caregivers highlighted educational concerns, while 40 percent mentioned concerns over getting infected. The concern over their children's education superseded other concerns such as financial worries (29%), dying (29%), their children's well-being (24%), or loss of work (22%).

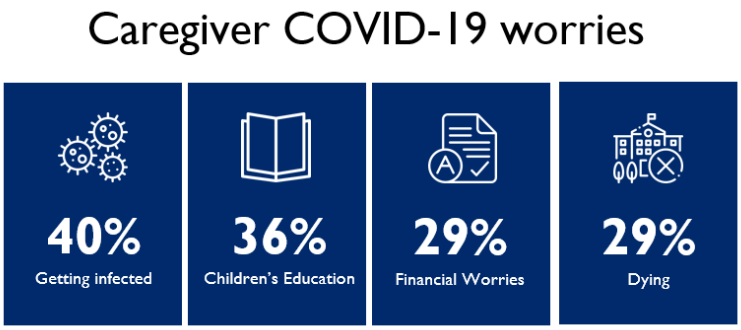


Figure 15: Caregivers' Concerns during the Pandemic

Caregiver Question: What worries you most about COVID-19? Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey conducted October 2021. Notes: Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Forty-four percent of caregivers say COVID-19 impacted negatively on their child's education. When asked about the ways in which their child(ren)'s learning/education has been disrupted by COVID-19, most caregivers spoke about them not attending every day, followed by saying that there was too much work/homework. Three-quarters of caregivers (78 percent) say the stress has affected learners' ability to learn.

While not all learners mentioned a COVID-19 related worry, 27 percent mentioned being unable to attend schools, 29 percent mentioned disliking mask wearing, and 29 percent mentioned that they could not play with others.

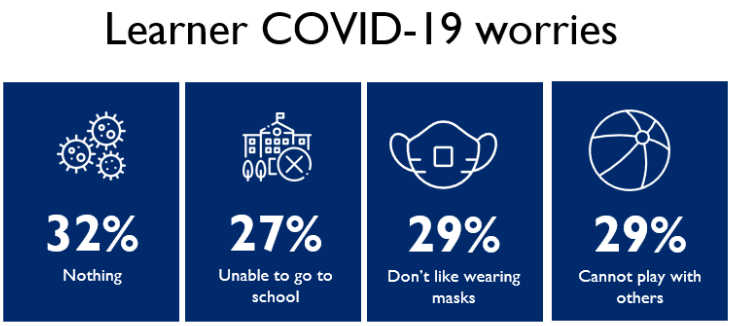


Figure 16: Learners' Concerns during the Pandemic

GeoPoll caregiver survey conducted October 2021. Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey conducted October 2021. Notes: Multiple response option. Notes: Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

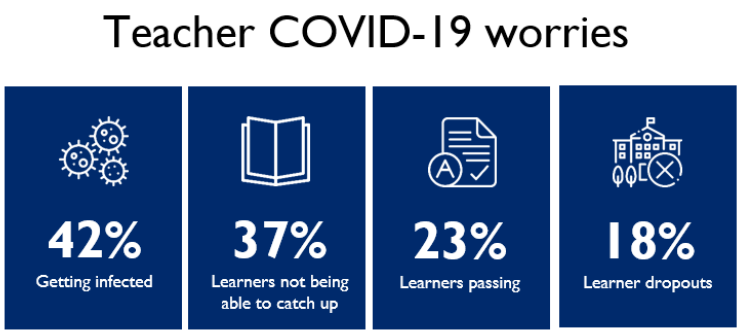


Figure 17: Teachers' Concerns during the Pandemic

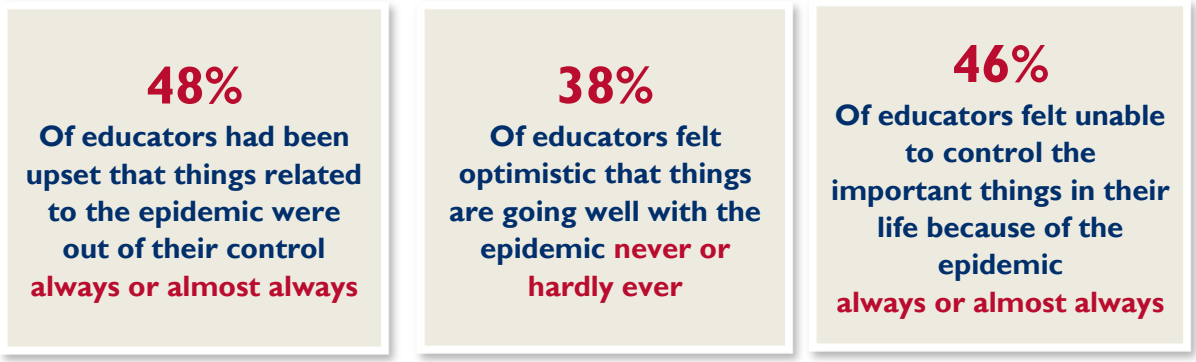
Teacher Question: What worries you the most about COVID-19 and teaching at the moment? Source: COVID-19 GeoPoll educator survey conducted January 2021. Notes: Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. All teacher and SMT respondents n=439

When asked what concerned educators the most in relation to COVID-19, 42 percent of respondents said "getting infected", followed by 37 percent indicating that they were concerned about learners not being able to catch up academically. A further 23 percent were concerned about learners passing without having had enough instruction during 2020, and 18 percent of respondents were concerned about learner drop-out. Qualitative open-ended responses from educators support these findings, with 26 percent of educators noting the negative effect of absenteeism and dropout (including irregular attendance due to COVID-19 regulations).

The data also showed that 16 percent of teachers were concerned about the lack of contact with learners and therefore, their limited ability to explain concepts. Relatedly, teachers were concerned about learners struggling with the curriculum content and not learning what they needed to learn. Further, qualitative open-ended responses indicated that teachers perceived or experienced that protocols prevented learning, noting problems such as masks making it difficult to communicate with and understand learners, confusion over the timetable and alternate teaching days. Educators mentioned other concerns specific to learners, such as learner forgetfulness, and a lack of learner concentration and focus, all of which will negatively influence learner outcomes.

STRESS EXPERIENCED DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND TEACHING/LEARNING

Educators are experiencing very high levels of perceived stress, according to data from 1,216 educators that completed an educator psychosocial well-being questionnaire during school visits. Sixty percent of educators indicated that they always or almost always felt nervous or stressed about the epidemic. Just below half of a sample (48%) of teachers surveyed in October 2021 had been always or almost always upset about feeling out of control related to the epidemic, while 46 percent always or almost always felt unable to control the important things in their life due to the epidemic. Fifty-seven percent of educators say the stress has affected their ability to teach "a lot".



Source: Educator well-being survey. Notes: Respondents were asked ten questions phrased as in this example: "How often have you felt that the difficulties are increasing in these days of COVID-19 and that you feel unable to overcome them?" Four items were phrased positively, six items were phrased negatively. Respondents could choose: Never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, very often, and don't know. For the purposes of interpretation, we group the responses "always" or "almost always" together, as well as "never" or "hardly ever". 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Caregivers are also reporting very high levels of stress. Caregivers reported being impacted by COVID-19 in three main ways i) financially, ii) illness or loss, and iii) emotionally. Financial impacts included financial and job losses and inability to find work. Many respondents reported feeling stressed in relation to COVID-19, and this was mostly linked to their sense of lack of control.

Learners say that, in the past year, their relationships with friends have been impacted, they cannot play as they did before, and they are concerned about getting sick or a loved-one dying. They mention that their studies are suffering more, and many speak negatively about the change in the school timetable. Learners mention the discomfort of wearing masks, some have strong fears about illness and death, and others mention an increase in the burden of child-care and household chores.

Learners report that they typically turn to their caregivers and friends for psychosocial support, so the erosion of the social aspect of schools has a detrimental effect on the psychosocial well-being of learners. More than three-quarters of surveyed caregivers indicate that the stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the ability of their children to learn.

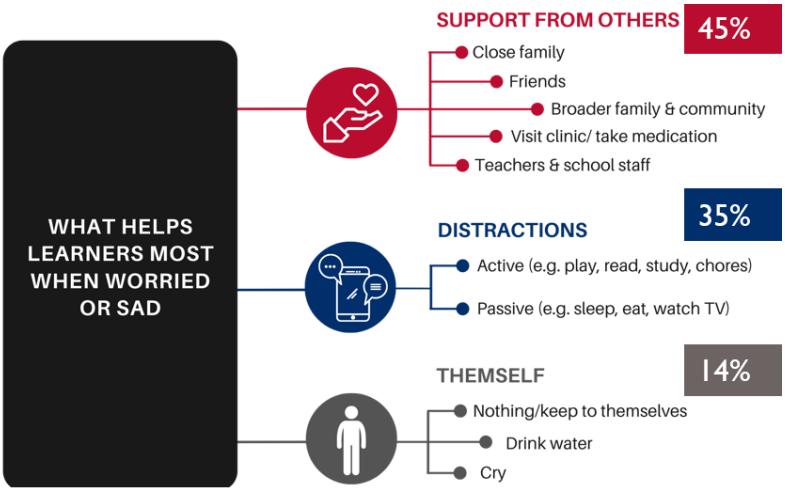


Figure 18: Learner Coping Strategies

Source: Learner well-being survey. Open-ended response format. 3,376 learner responses from 216 schools.

The learner is at the center of a range of nested systems that have all been subjected to psychosocial stresses. Teachers and caregivers show a high level of stress as measured with a psychosocial stress scale adapted for specifically the COVID-19 pandemic, and many report that their ability to teach and their ability to support learners have been negatively affected.

SUPPORT PROVIDED TO DEAL WITH THE STRESS CAUSED BY COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS

By and large, caregivers surveyed in October of 2021 felt that the support they got from the school's response to COVID-19 was normal or as expected (48% or 924 out of 1,925) or more than normal or expected (29% or 558 out of 1,925). This indicates that schools seem to have done well in providing support in relation to their response to COVID-19. Of concern, however, is that just below a quarter of respondents felt that the school provided limited (14% or 270 out of 1,925) or no support (8% or 154 out of 1,925). Schools may need to consider the ways they communicate with caregivers about their responses to COVID-19.

Educators that were surveyed in January of 2021, reported that they felt most supported by principals, less supported by district officials and least supported by Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), which logically reflects the relative distance in the structure of each relationship. Forty-three percent of teachers (523 of 1,217) reported that the support to continue teaching during school closures they received from principals was normal or as expected, while 36 percent said it was more than normal or as expected. A remaining 19 percent reported that they received no (9%) or limited (10%) support from their principals to continue teaching during school closures.

Many teachers surveyed in October 2021 felt supported by the district office: 17 percent felt 'very supported' while 26 percent felt 'slightly supported' and 27 percent felt 'moderately supported'. Only 16 percent felt not at all supported by the district office.

TYPE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

Question 3: What psychosocial and practical support can be provided to teachers and learners to help reduce their stress, and support their ability to teach?

3.1 What kind of psychological or practical support will help to reduce their COVID-19 related stress?
3.2 What kind of psychological or practical support do schools feel most able to provide?

To deal with education related stresses, 41 percent of 1,925 caregivers surveyed telephonically in October 2021 **ask for increased learning time, including that learners go back to school and that more tutoring be provided at school. They request the appointment of additional staff such as teaching assistants who can help facilitate more small group interactions in the class and individual reading support.**

Caregivers indicate that learner encouragement, adjustments in their workload and extra-mural activities could alleviate some psychosocial stress on learners. However, almost a fifth of surveyed caregivers do not know what schools could do to support learners.

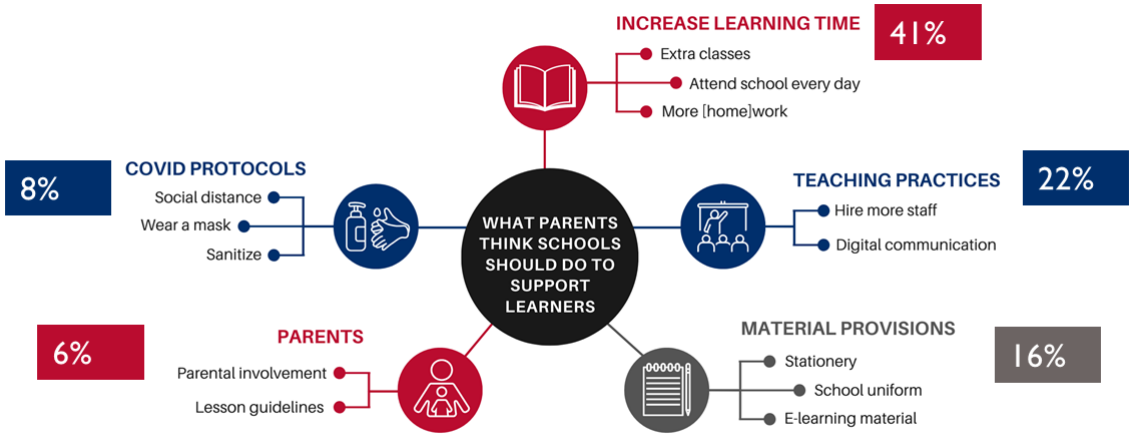


Figure 19: Caregiver Recommendations on Support for Teachers and Learners

Source: GeoPoll Caregiver survey. Notes: Open-ended response format. 1,925 Caregiver responses from 191 schools

Teachers request practical support from schools and the education department (district, provincial and national) to alleviate work-related concerns. Teachers requested help to improve their ability to teach, including training on the adjusting of ATPs (40%), training to adapt to change and identify new teaching approaches (38%), subject meetings on the adjusted curriculum (27%), and training on strategies to cope with home and school environments (27%). Educators are invested in learning new ways to teach, adjust curriculum and support learners. Finding appropriate training that could address this need would be necessary.

Materials for at-home learning were also frequently requested; particularly, materials in hard copy were felt to be the most feasible. To manage the psychosocial impact on themselves and learners, teachers request other forms of support, such as training on managing stress and supporting learners' well-being. They identify peer support in group discussions with other teachers,

conversations with their managers, individual counselling and the sharing of messages on accessible electronic platforms, such as WhatsApp.

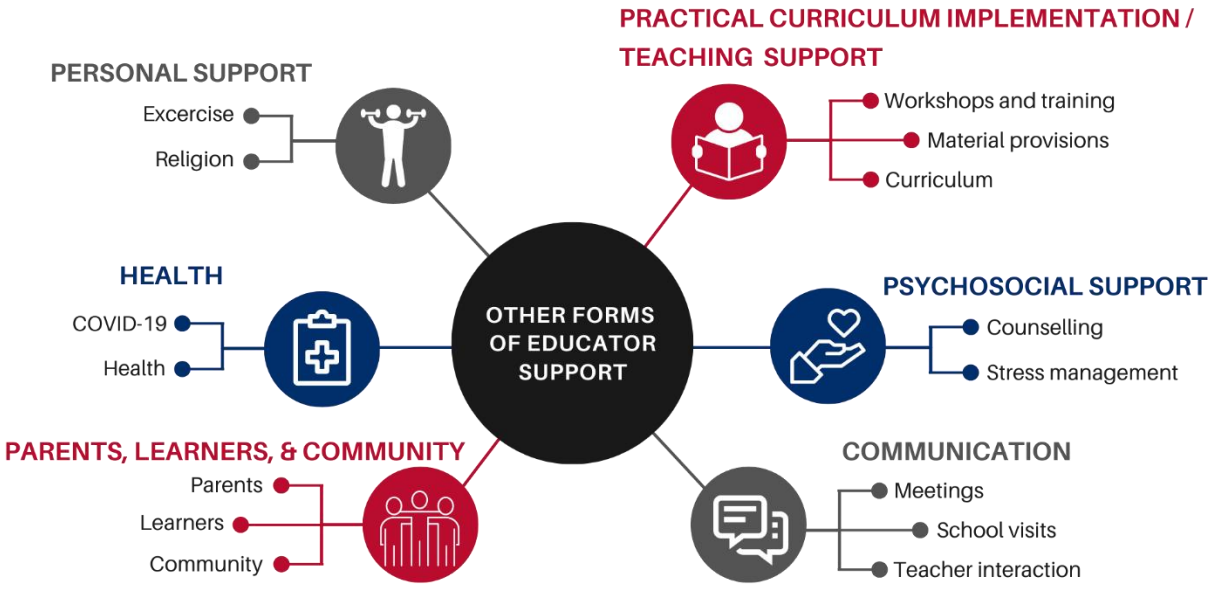


Figure 20: Educator Recommendations on Support for Teachers and Learners

Source: COVID-19 educator survey administered anonymously in Sept / Oct 2021 Notes: Open-ended response format. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Teachers were further asked about the kind of psychosocial support they currently access at their respective schools. The most common forms of psychosocial support were regular support meetings with the HOD or principal (27%), training on how to support learners' well-being (26%), peer support space for teachers to support one another (26%), and group sessions with other teachers where we can discuss stress and support each other (26%). The least common kind of psychosocial support accessed was individual sessions with a counsellor (14%), and 16 percent of teachers said that there was no psychological or practical support they could access at their school. Although some forms of support exist in schools, few respondents identified many. This indicates that educators feel that schools can provide some support in managing their COVID-19 related stress. Again, this highlights the role that the school plays as a source of psychosocial support in the lives of teachers and learners. It is crucial that the support they access through schools is appropriate and effective.

HOW DID COVID-19 AFFECT DISTRICT OFFICIALS' ABILITY TO FULFILL THEIR ROLE?

Five district officials responsible for supporting North West schools in the study sample indicate that their ability to support teachers during the lockdown, and when schools re-opened was significantly compromised.

District Officials spoke about the difficulty of gaining access to schools and teachers because of the COVID-19 regulations, but some data highlight that officials' own health concerns presented a challenge.

"As you know, we had lockdown and this COVID-19 where I was one of the people with co-morbidities – I was not supposed to go to schools." (District Official 1)

"It affected me greatly as I couldn't fulfil my role at first, as when COVID-19 cases started in the country we went into lockdown and from there we were told to stay home and we couldn't go visit schools. This meant that I could not call teachers to gather around so that I could give them feedback. It has also meant that my school visitations are longer and I see less teachers now." (District Official 4)

The small number of interviewed officials mentioned a few ways their normal way of work was disrupted. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, they were **unable to physically access schools** and teachers. They were **unable to carry out some tasks** such as in-classroom support due to social distancing requirements. The **frequency** with which they were able to support individual teachers were compromised where timetabling issues and absenteeism of teachers occurred. They had to provide support via **alternative modalities** – for example, virtual training or communication via WhatsApp, but they considered that this was less effective since teachers often struggled with connectivity. Lastly, they also indicated that the **support needs of teachers and schools** changed significantly – they had to provide guidance on the kinds of **learner activities** that teachers could try to facilitate when learners **are not at school,** they had to provide a response to the **psycho-social impact of COVID-19 related illness and death**, and they had a role in **monitoring the implementation of COVID-19 protocols in schools**.

"It was a nightmare as schools were closed and we did not have direct physical contact with the teachers we support. I couldn't assist teachers on lesson implementation. When things opened up the different schools' timetables also caused problems as teachers were not there or a teacher would have a class of a few learners because the others did not come on their allocated day." (District Official 3)

"They need more moral support and encouragement for them to carry on." (District Official 3)

"Stress is very high and the teachers are not coping and I can see that it is having an effect on how the teacher delivers the lesson. I also feel that learners are affected by the stress as most of them get it from their parents and then they don't attend school and when they do come to school teachers are finding it difficult to keep learners attention as some don't have books with them, one teacher noted to me that since learners were at home for a long period they are sleeping more in class or are more disruptive." (District Official 3)

The interviewed officials mentioned grave concerns about curriculum coverage and spoke of an ad hoc approach to the trimmed curriculum and mixed messages sent to schools.

"Teachers managed only to cover 30 percent *of the curriculum because even if we are in the same province, in the same department – we do things differently. Lots of confusion with trimmed ATPs. Every subject specialist used their own method to help the teachers. I said to my teachers – focus on the skills that need to be assessed for the next grade, but what I was saying was against what the department wants; that the teacher must not teach for assessment, but at that time it was hectic, with lots of confusion. But that's what I told them, to follow the School Based Assessment (SBA) guideline." (District Official 3)*

"I cannot say much on the positive. Honestly, I cannot. I can say only the negatives because teachers were used to following the RSP lesson plans, teachers were used to follow the ATPs that they

received from the sub-district, then all of a sudden – here comes trimmed ATPs. Whereby it was a bit complicated to them. It took a lot of teachers' time to conceptualize what was on the ATP so that they can teach the learners, but for those RSP ones they had to check the skill on the trimmed ATP, they had to look for the skills, etc. took lots of time." (District Official 1)

None of the interviewed officials were positive about the possibility of catching up the learning losses.

"No, they will only be able to catch up in 2023 if we have no more disruptions." (District Official 3)

"I do not see how they could, especially the Grade 2, 3. The Grade 1 learners there will be of little concern for them as they will be coming from Grade R[10]. the Grade 2, 3 and 4 learners will may take up to a year to catch up if there are no disruptions."

None of the interviewed District Officials felt that they were adequately equipped to provide the kind of support they thought necessary– they did not have access to **devices and internet** connectivity to facilitate electronic communication, and they were unable to provide the **printed resources that teachers requested.** They were **required to improvise** when it came to providing guidance on the **how to facilitate at-home learning**, and were ill-equipped to **provide moral support for teachers and managers** during the difficult times.

"Actually, I lacked resources because I improvised a lot. Even now I have to use my own resources – because my sub-district does not provide us with the necessary resources. So, I have some challenges; during COVID-19 – even now I have the challenges. But I'm improvising a lot." (District Official 1)

"What I need to better support me is to have resources that allow me to carry out my work when I am at schools such as a mobile router, and printed resources to take to the teachers who don't have printers at schools." (District Official 2)

"What resources, I'm talking about the gadget itself, data and the transport. Sometimes the schools would require me to come and do a mini-workshop, at their school – lack of transport; sometimes I'm unable. But if I can get data[11], I can support schools 80 percent*. I am using my own data. My employer does not provide." (District Official 3)*

"When we went into lockdown initially it was unfamiliar territory for me in which I did not know how to operate in." (District Official 5).

Officials implore the DBE to provide them with resources to do their job more effectively.

"Please take these recommendations to the DBE – at the moment [we are] unable to do our jobs. Because of contextual factors. But we want to support the teachers.

We lack resources. Take these to DBE. Maybe we could have virtual training/ communication. Then I think we would have managed it better. Waiting for someone to collect me to visit one of my schools and I'm supporting more than 50 schools." (District Official 1).

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[10] Grade R stands for the Reception year of school, equivalent to Kindergarten.
[11] "Get data" refers to airtime allowing access to communication.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental effect on South African schooling, as it has had on the rest of the world. In 2021, the South African government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic included a hard lockdown which halted activities in all sectors. The DBE followed suit and closed schools for a period of 3 months, but once government regulations permitted, the phased reopening of schools allowed some grades to return earlier and some later. The DBE also required that rotational timetabling be implemented if social distancing guidelines defined by the government could not be met by schools (a likely scenario given the extent of large class sizes in no-fee schools). This meant that, in addition to the lost contact time during school closures, at least half of available contact teaching time was lost in no-fee schools in the North West EGRS I sampled in 2020. Reducing the social distancing restrictions in schools from 1.5 meter to 1 meter in July 2021 only went a little way in alleviating the problem of rotational attendance, with 44 percent of EGRS I primary schools still implementing a rotational system by Term 3 of 2021.

The DBE response to COVID-19 was crafted within limits established by the government but also in response to health concerns from caregivers and teachers. For many stakeholders, the main concern was that they, or their loved ones, may contract the virus. COVID-19 protocols such as sanitizing and social distancing in schools are, for the most part, observed. Masks are worn by most, but not all, learners. Teachers are wearing masks, even though they report that not all learners can hear them adequately when they teach.

A very prominent second worry amongst all stakeholders surveyed (educators, caregivers and SMT members), was the detrimental impact of COVID-19 disruptions on the education of learners. By Term 3 of 2021, in the second year of the pandemic, caregivers and teachers were equally worried about health concerns and educational disruptions. For caregivers, worries about educational losses for their children were more prominent than worries about loss of income, jobs and other financial concerns. A large number of teachers had work related worries, such as being unable to cope with the curriculum demands, but they were also particularly worried about impacts on the education of learners.

According to teachers, there is a visible drop in many learners' ability to read. An analysis of Grade 3 learner work completed in DBE workbooks in Term 3 of 2021, shows that learners are doing significantly less writing compared with pre-COVID-19 years. Teachers say that a large number of learners are unlikely to keep up with the demands of the curriculum.

In response to concerns about the education of learners, caregivers are calling for the increase of contact teaching – both by letting all learners return full time to school, but also by implementing extra classes to provide support for learners that have fallen behind. Historically, there is a trend of discretionary closing of schools before the end of the school year, and this additional loss of teaching and learning time should be addressed as a priority. Other losses of contact teaching time, for example, when municipal water or electrical supply is disrupted, should also be minimized as far as possible.

The caregiver survey (1,925 caregivers) shows that while they can assist learners with school-work at home, at least a quarter of caregivers feel that the work is too difficult or confusing. The stress placed on caregivers by the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected caregivers' ability to support their children.

In addition to the loss of contact teaching time and the associated impact on the education of learners, there are indications that the COVID-19 disruptions also filtered into other priority

programs delivered through schools. Compared to 2018, there is a drop in the dietary diversity offered through the school nutrition program. About a quarter of surveyed caregivers say that learners receive less food at school.

Based on these findings, we provide 12 recommendations for the DBE:

1. **Discontinue rotational learner attendance schedules as soon as possible** since the continued loss of contact teaching and learning will further hamper learning of foundational numeracy and literacy skills, which will have severe implications for children's development and future life outcomes. COVID-19 regulations issued by the government under the national state of disaster declared on March 15, 2020, however, constrains what the DBE can allow in schools.

2. **Minimize the loss of teaching and learning time** due to other reasons, such as the discretionary early closure of schools, closures due to disruption in water supply, and loss of learning time due to onerous learner screening protocols.

3. **Ensure that foundational skills are readily taught and assessed in later grades.** Learning losses and teacher reports clearly indicate that children in early grades have lost out on the teaching of foundational skills, including basic decoding skills. Yet, learning begets learning. Basic literacy and numeracy teaching should be prioritized by integrating the teaching of foundational skills and assessing basic competencies into higher grades.

4. **Develop an integrated strategy that prioritizes the implementation of catch-up programs** by drawing on resources in schools, the community and in the education development community. Consider establishing and using **community afterschool homework facilities to support out-of-school learning.**

5. **Develop a national remedial program to support home learning which** integrates already available resources that support oral and written learning into a home-learning program so that a less fragmented offering is available for teachers to use as a supportive tool for themselves and for caregivers.

6. **Develop homework plans to support effective supervisory home-support to learners who need to complete parts of their DBE workbooks outside of school.** This may also help caregivers to engage better with homework guidance. Homework plans should integrate with revised ATPs and be made available in low tech, scalable and easy to share format.

7. **Ensure that teaching and learning resources, particularly reading resources, are readily accessible to support home learning.** Promising strategies include making reading anthologies available to learners or making open-source stories accessible to households through partnerships with print media or apps.

8. **Only maintain minimally disruptive COVID-19 protocols in the schools to allay the health worries of educators, teachers and caregivers.** When changes to protocols are made, and effectively communicate the health and education trade-offs involved.

9. **Revise teaching protocols to allow teachers to conduct at least some teaching without masks** if in a well-ventilated space – to support the teaching and learning of language in particular the Foundation Phase.

10. **Provide training and support** to teachers so that they can effectively teach according to **adjusted annual teaching plans**. Help teachers identify and implement alternative **teaching approaches and provide in-classroom support from district officials and external coaches, where possible.**

11. **Encourage peer-to-peer support amongst teachers** by providing guidance and resources to SMT members to help them create more opportunities for in-person and virtual peer support between teachers.

12. **Launch a campaign to strongly encourage and support psychosocial check-ins at different levels of the school** since this is a way of decreasing feelings of isolation and increasing feelings of support. This should include information on how to identify psychosocial distress (in self and others) and what steps to take to address it (e.g., referral places and different self-care/support options).

APPENDIX 1: Detailed Methodology Description

This consolidated COVID-19 research report draws on data collected through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) with school management teams, teachers and parents; questionnaires collected in schools with school management, teachers, and learners; and interviews with district officials. The different data collection and analysis methods are discussed below.

The evaluation team was concerned that psychosocial distress may be triggered by questions on the impact of COVID-19, particularly in those that may have experienced bereavement as a result of COVID-19. The team was also concerned that data collectors could experience distress as a result of collecting potentially distressing data or collecting data under circumstances that may carry higher risk of COVID-19 infections. A psychosocial distress protocol was developed to help guide data collectors and supervisors on the appropriate steps to take in the case of psychosocial distress by survey respondents, and was applied for telephonic surveys as well as in-person data collection. All data collectors were trained on the distress protocol.

COMPUTER ASSISTED TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWING (CATI)

Background

For this research, two CATI surveys were administered:

1. GeoPoll[12] Educator (Teacher/School Management Team) CATI Survey
2. GeoPoll Parent/ caregiver CATI survey

These surveys are described further in the sections below.

GEOPOLL EDUCATOR (TEACHER/SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM) CATI SURVEY

The educator survey was implemented in four phases.

PHASE 1 – INSTRUMENT DESIGN AND SAMPLING

Khulisa, together with the DBE and USAID, refined the research questions proposed in the Study Protocol and Methodology plan and then set out to craft survey questions that could respond to each of the three COVID-19 research questions and sub-questions. The questions were reviewed with GeoPoll. GeoPoll worked closely to adapt Khulisa's comprehensive survey tool that evaluated how COVID-19 has impacted teachers' and principals' ability to cope with the changing expectations.

The review process included initial scripting of the survey instrument into GeoPoll standard format, an iterative process of edits and finalization, and a final translation to Setswana. The GeoPoll technical team performed programming and internal testing to prepare the survey for launch on the GeoPoll app. This app allows the interviewer to read and see each individual question as well as operator directions for each question. The app also provides an interface to record respondents'

[12] GeoPoll is a full-service research provider and mobile surveying platform. They administered the two CATI surveys used in this study. Throughout this report were refer to these surveys as the GeoPoll surveys. GeoPoll, as an international service provider, obtained a South African research approval prior to training and survey launch.

survey responses. The CATI platform is hosted online, which enables quality assurance/quality control measures as the data is reviewed daily by the central data team.

The first set of questions confirmed or collected biographic information from respondents: their name, the name of the school where they work, the district of the school, their designation, their gender, their age, the grade they taught in 2021 and the year in which they started teaching. The second set of questions investigated schools' responses during lockdown and after learners returned to schools in 2021. The third set of questions probed teachers' perceptions regarding learners' learning losses, and questions appropriate to the educators' role (i.e., teacher or SMT member) were asked. Therefore, some teachers answered the educator and SMT questions.

The fourth set of 22 questions probed topics related to psychosocial well-being. Most of these (14) were single response questions asked to all the respondents (teachers and SMT members). Depending on whether respondents identified as SMT or teacher, they would receive different questions specific to their role. SMT members were asked four specific single response questions (regarding support felt from district officials, province and governing body and how COVID-19 related stress has impacted on their ability to manage schools) while teachers were asked two single response questions (regarding support received from principals and effect COVID-19 has had on their teaching). All respondents were asked what worries them most about COVID-19, and responses were ticked against present options that were not read out to respondents. Finally, one open-ended question was asked to all respondents on how they thought COVID-19 had affected learners' ability to learn.

The survey included nine items drawn from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) modified for COVID-19 (PSS10-C). The PSS10-C instrument was validated in adult populations in Colombia. However, in our sample, the internal consistency was found lacking. Cronbach's alpha for the 9 items of the scale were $\alpha = 0.53$. The mean score across all respondents was 19.05 with the lowest score being 0 and the highest 36. Given the low-reliability score, we reported on the individual items rather than the overall stress scale score.

Khulisa provided GeoPoll with a dataset of teachers, principals and SMTs telephone numbers collected from the 229 schools of the evaluation sample. To consolidate this dataset, Khulisa undertook the following process:

1. Contacted the Foundation for Professional Development (FPD), the implementers of the EGRS I follow-on project – the Reading Support Project (RSP), to obtain the data they had in November 2020. This included:

    a. The final list of RSP project schools with phone numbers for principals/deputy principals, and

    b. A list of all teachers that participated in the RSP, as captured by RSP coaches.

2. Identified gaps in the dataset and supplemented the data set with phone numbers collected in fieldwork conducted in the same 229 schools in 2018.

3. Topped up missing phone numbers by phoning six schools for which Khulisa had not retrieved any contact details. Each school was called individually to obtain the principal, HOD and teacher cellphone numbers.

4. The consolidated dataset was shared with the DBE for checking and adding further data

5. An updated dataset from the DBE was received after a representative called all schools and updated the phone numbers, where available

At the end of the process, the database comprised 1,715 mobile numbers, divided into the two subjects of research interest: teachers (n=1,257) and principals (n=458).

Upon receipt of the contact details from Khulisa, GeoPoll cleaned the dataset. The purpose of cleaning was to create a sample that only had unique entries, which required identifying and removing incomplete and duplicate numbers. First, all numbers were reformatted for consistency (e.g., parenthesis and dashes are removed, converted to numbers in excel, the country code [27] is separated from the main phone number, etc.). The reformatted main numbers were measured for length, and numbers shorter or longer than nine characters were removed. At this point, the sample only contained complete numbers and GeoPoll checked for and removed duplicate entries. The final, cleaned dataset had 1,443 (1,219 teachers and 224 principals) telephone numbers. The goal was to obtain a thirty percent survey completion rate for each category: 366 teachers and 68 principals.

PHASE 2 – CALL CENTER SET-UP, OPERATOR TRAINING AND PILOTING

Based on the sample size, anticipated response rates and timelines of the survey, GeoPoll recruited a team of four supervisors and 19 call center operators/enumerators from their pool of available staff.

GeoPoll spent three days training the interviewers on the purpose of the surveys, CATI ethics and human subject research. Enumerators were also trained in other best practices, including answering frequently asked questions, providing negative versus positive response reinforcement, and employing neutral probing techniques. Khulisa staff provided additional training on psychosocial distress protocols to the enumerators to better prepare for the survey's sensitive contents.

GeoPoll team members and Khulisa representatives presented modules addressing the following:

- Principles of interviewing, including sampling methods, respondent recruitment and handling, question types, interviewing techniques, performance measurement, optimal call times, and quality
- Distress protocols focused on managing distress in research, identifying a distressed respondent, referring helplines, and follow-up on respondents' well-being.
- Professional and ethical standards, including expected behavior of operators during phone calls
- Survey instrument review, including:
    - Reasons why specific questions are included in the survey instrument and how they should be asked
    - Explanation of the terminology used throughout the questionnaire, including a potential "cheat sheet" provided to operators
    - Discussion on how to reply to challenging questions posed by respondents, including a sheet with standard answers as a guide to operators
- Systems training, including:
    - How to enter data into the data entry tool

- How to manage phone numbers and subdivide calls between operators

As part of GeoPoll training protocol, operators conduct mock interviews with volunteers outside of the sample, where they practice entering data in the GeoPoll CATI Tool just as they would during live data collection. The operator supervisor listens to the mock phone calls and provides guidance. The hands-on practice aims to deepen each operators' understanding of the questionnaire and identify knowledge and/or skills gaps that need to be addressed before data collection commences.

For this survey, GeoPoll undertook a pilot with a smaller sample size (n=31) to ensure the questionnaire was performing as expected. Results from this pilot were analyzed by GeoPoll and shared with the Khulisa team for additional analysis. Minor revisions were made to the instrument based on this analysis and feedback from the DBE, before moving into the production phase.

PHASE 3 – SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION AND DATA ENTRY

Following the pilot stage, the GeoPoll technical team uploaded the mobile phone numbers into a dialer system which dials the number and routes it to an available interviewer upon pick-up. This acts as a quality control mechanism so that GeoPoll is confident that the correct phone numbers are being dialed. Before starting the main data collection on the January 27, 2021, GeoPoll took the additional step of first sending two rounds (on January 21 and 26, 2021) of one-way SMS messages to a) make the sample aware of the upcoming survey and b) increase the initial response rate.

Once data collection started, respondents had an option to initially opt-in to the survey. If a respondent chose not to participate, the interviewer noted this, ending the call. If a respondent requested to be called at a different time, the interviewer indicated this time in the dialer system, which automatically reminded the interviewer to call back at the appropriate/agreed upon time. The system also noted if there was no answer, an answering machine picked up, or if calls were disconnected part-way through an interview. Respondents could also elect to complete the survey either in English or in Setswana.

Interviewers called each nonresponsive number five times before abandoning it to align with accepted standards. Complimentarily, one-way short message system (SMS) reminders were sent to nonresponsive numbers in hopes of reactivating them (see the table below for the dates and times). Re-targeting the sample to focus on this nonresponsive subset helped sustain respondent engagement and boost completion rates. However, sending too many consecutive messages can overstimulate the sample and hamper responsiveness. After the two preliminary messages, the team waited until they called all numbers in the sample twice before sending another round of SMS reminders (February 2, 2021) to give people time to respond. One more round of SMS reminders was sent one week later on the morning collection was scheduled to close (February 9, 2021) to serve as a final call for participation.

Table 3: One-way SMS Reminder Messages

SMS Delivery Details (time and quantity)		
Date	**Time (ZA time)**	**Number of SMSs Sent**
21-JAN-21	1:10 PM	1,443
26-JAN-21	11:00 AM	1,443
02-FEB-21	4:08 PM	818
09-FEB-21	8:50 AM	214
TOTAL		**3,918**

Finally, respondents who completed the survey received airtime as an incentive, generally a day or two after completion of the survey. An airtime credit of the equivalent of USD $1.00 was provided to respondents who completed the survey.

PHASE 4 – DATA TRANSMISSION AND DELIVERY

All data is securely stored within the GeoPoll CATI platform when the operators finish calls. The platform contains columns for each answer and is formatted consistently across the database, allowing easy export. GeoPoll does not share personally identifiable information and creates a Unique ID as an identifier. This ID assigns random codes to each phone number so that numbers will not be revealed when the data is shared. The Unique ID generator always assigns the same code to the same phone number, so panel tracking is possible, though this survey was not conducted as a panel.

Upon completing the CATI survey, GeoPoll organized and cleaned the data, and provided Excel crosstabulations and basic analysis as pre-determined by Khulisa. For this study, interim data was also delivered during survey production to Khulisa.

PRODUCTION STATISTICS

Survey dispositions are defined in the following ways for GeoPoll surveys.

- ***Surveys Sent*** represents the total number of unique CATI calls made.
- ***Reachable*** is the number of respondents who had operating phone numbers and were successfully contacted; it is calculated independently from the other dispositions.
- ***Opt-ins*** are defined as the number of respondents within the total number of calls made that agree to participate.
- ***Completes*** are defined as those respondents that successfully complete the survey in full.
- ***Drop-offs***, also commonly referred to as the breakoff rate, are the total number of respondents that dropped-off somewhere in the survey and did not complete the survey after agreeing to participate.
- ***Refusals*** are defined as the number of respondents that refuse to take the survey at any point.
- ***Ineligibles*** are the number of respondents that are ineligible for participation based on any exclusionary requirements within the questionnaire.
- ***Nonresponse*** are the total number of calls made where an individual did not answer the phone, received an answering machine or if the number was disconnected. All percentages for CATI surveys are calculated based on the total number of surveys sent.

The dispositions for the CATI survey conducted in South Africa between January 27 and February 9, 2021 is presented in the following table.

Table 4: Production Statistics

Production Statistics	Count	Percent
Surveys Sent	1,491	100%
Reachable	1,326	89%
Opt-ins	974	73%
Completes	439	33%
Drop-offs	478	36%
Ineligible	57	4%
Nonresponse	191	13%
Refusals	352	27%

Source: Khulisa: COVID-19 Education Survey

The survey yielded a total response rate of 73 percent and a total completion rate of 33 percent.

Throughout the fourteen-day data collection for the Khulisa COVID-19 Education Survey, GeoPoll sent approximately 1,491 survey invitations to teachers and SMT members (e.g., principals, deputy principals, and head of departments) in Khulisa's database. The number of surveys sent was larger than the 1,443 contacts in the sample because numerous entries provided secondary or tertiary numbers. The number of surveys sent yielded approximately 974 opt-ins to the survey for an initial response rate of 73 percent. Of those who opted-in, 57 (4%) were deemed ineligible due to age or no longer holding a teaching or SMT position. Of those eligible, 487 (36%) dropped-off at some point in the survey.

ANALYSIS AND TRIANGULATION

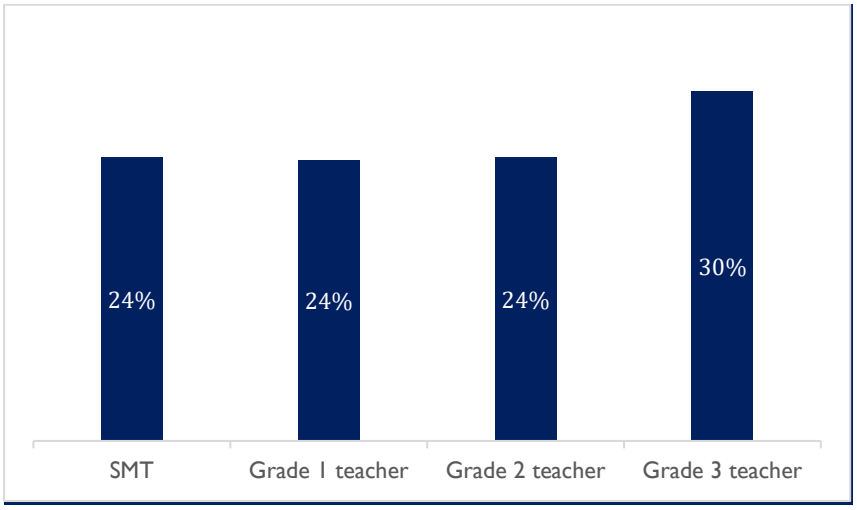
A largely descriptive approach was used to evaluate the quantitative educator COVID-19 survey data on teaching and learning disruptions. In addition to splitting out the responses by educator or SMT samples surveyed, responses were disaggregated by age, gender or role. For those in EGRS I schools, we considered how educator responses to GeoPoll questions may vary by the overall Setswana reading performance of the school as reflected in 2018 mean Grade 4 oral reading fluency scores and by the rural/urban location of the school. The open-ended qualitative responses were analyzed using thematic analysis.

The educator COVID-19 survey did not lean to answering all of the COVID-19 research questions – some of the questions were answered in other data collection efforts, which included a parent COVID-19 survey, a learner COVID-19-questionnaire, district official COVID-19 interview, and a range of contextual tools which were administered when the Khulisa fieldwork team visited schools later in 2021. The Khulisa team used these additional data sources to triangulate the findings of the educator COVID-19 survey reported here.

GEOPOLL EDUCATOR SURVEY - EDUCATOR LEVEL ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE RATES

Of the 1,443 persons reflected in the sampling frame, 31 percent were successfully interviewed by GeoPoll. Respondents included 107 unique SMT members and 332 unique teachers. Of the total realized educator sample with their grade specified, almost a quarter (24%) are Grade 1 teachers, a further quarter (24%) are Grade 2 teachers, and 30 percent are Grade 3 teachers as seen in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Educator Role in the COVID-19 survey



The following tables provide details on educator response rates by the characteristics of the sampling frame. The following response patterns are noted:

- Response rates differ very little by the role of the educator, but for those with missing information on their 'role', response rates are much lower (18%) (refer to Table 5).
- Response rates are virtually identical in Dr Kenneth Kaunda (KK) and Ngaka Modiri Molema (NMM) (refer to Table 6).
- Response rates are slightly higher among Grade 3 teachers (36%) compared with Grade 1 (30%) and Grade 2 teachers (29%) (refer to Table 7).

Table 5: Completed response rate by role of educators

	Percent with completed survey response	Total "sampling frame" (n)
Educator	32%	987
Departmental head	31%	120
Principal	33%	224
Missing	18%	112
Total of Sampling Frame	31%	1,443

Table 6: Completed teacher response rate by school district

	Percent with completed survey response	Total "sampling frame" (n)
Dr. Kenneth Kaunda	31%	482
Ngaka Modiri Molema	31%	950
Total of Sampling Frame	31%	1,432

Table 7: Completed response rate by grade taught by educators

	Percent with completed survey response	Total "sampling frame" N
Principals (not asked grade taught)	33%	224
Teachers: Grade Missing	17%	109
Teachers: Grade = 1	30%	370
Teachers: Grade = 2	29%	369
Teachers: Grade = 3	36%	371
Total of Sampling Frame	31%	1,443

While there appear to be very few differences in response rates by these educator level characteristics, there are notable differences in response rates by school level characteristics, as can be seen in the next section.

GEOPOLL EDUCATOR SURVEY - SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE RATES

This section highlights selective response patterns by school characteristics and thus the non-representativity of the sample.

SCHOOL RESPONSE RATES

The completed educator CATI survey responses are for educators in 197 individual schools. Since 265 individual schools were reflected in the sampling frame of educator mobile numbers provided to GeoPoll, successful responses were therefore obtained from three-quarters of the schools in the sampling frame. This school level response rate at 74 percent is notably higher than the teacher/principal level response rate at 31 percent.

In quarter 4 of 2019, 1,537 schools in North West Province were reflected on the DBE's master list of schools. Completed responses were obtained from educators in 13 percent of all schools in the North West province.

Although the educator sample is dominated by responses from Foundation Phase teachers (Grades 1 to 3 teachers), of those that self-report as Foundation Phase teachers, they are located in only 156 of the 197 schools.

Many of the mobile numbers for educators in the sampling frame were drawn from EGRS I schools. Table 9 identifies how responses at the school level vary by the treatment arm of the EGRS I.

- 229 (86%) EGRS I schools are reflected in the sampling frame of 265 individual schools.
- In the completed survey sample, responses from educators in 165 EGRS I schools (72% of all EGRS I schools) were obtained.
- Responses by schools were more likely to be obtained from educators in the parent treatment arm (78% of 50 schools), and the coaching arm (78% of 50 schools) compared with the training (73% of 49 schools) and control arms (64% of 80 schools)

Table 8 shows the number of educator responses by school. Typically, four educators were surveyed per school as reflected by the median. In EGRS I schools, about five educators were typically surveyed per school.

Table 8: Schools in the educator CATI survey and the "sampling frame", by district

			By North West Districts			
		All NW schools	Dr KK	NMM	Bojanala	Other
2019 Q4 Master list of schools	N	1,537	208	439	528	362
'Sampling frame' of schools provided to GeoPoll	N	265	66	198	0	0
	Percent of Master list	17%	32%	45%	0%	0%
Number of schools reflected in completed surveys from educators	N	197	50	147	0	0
	Percent of school 'sampling frame'	74%	76%	74%	0%	0%
	Percent of Master list	13%	24%	33%	0%	0%

Source: Completed educator CATI survey, Sampling frame to GeoPoll and Master list of Schools.
Notes: The name of districts assigned to schools vary across the Master list, EGRS I and educator COVID-19 survey data. We use the district name per the educator COVID-19 survey and EGRS I lists, where discrepancies exist.

Table 9: EGRS I schools by district and treatment reflected in completed educator CATI survey

			By district		By treatment			
		All NW schools	Dr KK	NMM	Control	Training	Coaching	Parents
'Sampling frame' of schools provided to GeoPoll	N	265	53	190	NA	NA	NA	NA
2018 EGRS I school list	N	229	176	53	80	49	50	50
'Sampling frame' of schools provided to GeoPoll	N	229	176	53	80	49	50	50
	percent of school 'sampling frame'	86%	11%	3%	N-A	NA	NA	NA
Number of schools reflected in completed surveys from educators	N	165	127	38	51	36	39	39
	percent of EGRS I schools	72%	72%	72%	64%	73%	78%	78%

Source: Completed educator CATI survey, Sampling frame to GeoPoll and Master list of Schools. Own calculations.
Notes: The name of districts assigned to schools vary across the Master list of schools, EGRS I and educator COVID-19 survey data. We use the district name as per the educator COVID-19 survey and EGRS I lists, where discrepancies exist.

Table 10: Number of teacher/ principal completed responses by unique schools

	mean	p10	p25	p50	p75	p90	min	max	N
Number of educator responses per school	5.4	1	3	4	7	10	1	15	265
Number of educator responses per EGRS I school	6.1	3	4	5	8	11	1	15	165

Source: Completed educator CATI survey. Own calculations.

RESPONSE RATES BY SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

By merging across datasets, we identify additional school level response characteristics as reflected in Table 11 and Table 12:

- Completed responses are obtained from educators in 50 individual schools in Dr Kenneth Kaunda (reflecting 24% of all schools in that district) and 147 individual schools in Ngaka Modiri Molema (33% of all district schools). Thus, the educator responses are likely to be more representative of schools in Ngaka Modiri Molema than Dr Kenneth Kaunda.

Concerning the school quintile, the sampling frame consisted of educator mobile numbers only for quintiles 1 to 3 schools.

- The likelihood of responses was higher from quintiles 1 and 2 North West schools (24% and 33%) relative to those located in quintile 3 schools (8%), partly due to the higher representation of quintiles 1 and 2 schools in the sampling frame of mobile numbers provided to GeoPoll.

Table 11: School quintiles reflected in the educator COVID-19 survey data

		By quintile					
		1	2	3	4	5	Private
2019 Q4 Master list of schools	N	519	303	486	130	12	85
'Sampling frame' of schools provided to GeoPoll	N	130	77	57	0	0	0
	percent of Master list	25%	25%	12%	0%	0%	0%
Number of schools reflected in completed surveys from educators	N	97	61	39	0	0	0
	percent of school 'sampling frame'	75%	79%	68%	0%	0%	0%
	percent of Master list	19%	20%	8%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Completed educator COVID-19 survey, Sampling frame GeoPoll and Master list of Schools. Own calculations.
Notes: The name of districts assigned to schools vary across the Master list, EGRS I and educator COVID-19 survey data. We use the district name as per the educator COVID-19 survey and EGRS I lists, where discrepancies exist.

The response characteristics were considered in a multivariate context.

Table 12: Predicting the EGRS I schools reflected in completed GeoPoll survey responses

	(1)	(2)
Quintile 2 (Ref: quintile 1)	-0.026	-0.066
	(0.070)	(0.075)
Quintile 3 (Ref = quintile 1)	-0.151*	-0.216**
	(0.085)	(0.092)
1. Training (Ref = control)	-0.004	-0.023
	(0.082)	(0.087)
2. Coaching (Ref = control)	0.051	-0.015
	(0.082)	(0.088)
3. Parents (Ref = control)	0.153*	0.100
	(0.082)	(0.088)
Number of educators in 2019	0.009**	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.005)
School median grade 4 wave 4 ORF Setswana	-0.001	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Kenneth Kaunda district (Ref: Ngaka Modiri)	-0.138*	-0.129
	(0.076)	(0.080)
Rural		-0.165**
		(0.077)
Constant	0.224**	0.403**
	(0.108)	(0.149)
Observations	227	201
R-squared	0.058	0.072

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.001. Missing data for 2 EGRS I schools in estimation 1. Missing rural indicator for 228 schools in regression 2. Sample only includes one teacher observation per school.

As seen in Table 12, which is a linear regression model predicting which EGRS I schools were represented in the completed educator COVID-19 survey responses, we find that EGRS I school responses are:

- Less likely to be obtained from educators in quintile 3 EGRS I schools (compared to quintile 1 EGRS I schools) and/or those in EGRS I schools in Dr Kenneth Kaunda relative to Ngaka Modiri Molema districts;
- More likely to be obtained from educators in the parent control arm (relative to the control schools) and EGRS I schools with more educators; and
- Less likely to come from those in rural EGRS I schools.

GEOPOLL PARENT/ CAREGIVER CATI SURVEY

As with the educator CATI survey, GeoPoll administered the survey following a four-phased approach. The execution of phases one, two and four were fairly similar across both CATI surveys. Therefore, descriptions below have been abbreviated to avoid duplication. For more detail, please read section above on the educator CATI survey.

PHASE 1 – INSTRUMENT DESIGN: ELECTRONIC SURVEYS

Similar to the educator CATI survey, Khulisa, together with the DBE and USAID, refined the research questions, crafted appropriate survey questions, and translated these into Setswana. The survey items were reviewed with GeoPoll. The final survey consisted of 20 questions (19 close-ended and one open ended) and included the PSS-10 questions present in the educator CATI survey.

In contrast to the previous CATI survey, this survey included an additional component to instrument development – a pre-pilot. In order to develop the 19 close-ended questions that were part of the survey, the research team decided to call parents/ caregivers to ask them some of the questions, gather potential close-ended response options and verify that they were understanding the questions. This pre-pilot was conducted in June 2021 and included two rounds of interviews, with ten and 11 respondents respectively. After each round, questions were revised to incorporate feedback received from respondents.

PHASE 2 – CALL CENTER SET-UP AND OPERATOR TRAINING

Phase 2 of the parent/caregiver survey roll-out was very similar to what was described previously. After the pre-pilot in phase 1 a second pilot phase took place after the training of enumerators. Respondents could elect to complete the survey in either Setswana or in English.

GeoPoll piloted the survey using the trained enumerators prior to the full survey launch, GeoPoll conducted a 60-respondent pilot to ensure that respondents understood the survey without any issues. After review of the pilot data, minor edits were made to the questionnaire, which were then updated in programming as well.

PHASE 3 – SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION AND DATA ENTRY

Khulisa supplied a sample of phone numbers to GeoPoll. There were 8,227 unique telephone numbers for parents and caregivers from 229 EGRS I schools. During school-based fieldwork, a paper consent form was sent home for caregivers to complete, and they were asked to provide their telephonic number is they wanted to opt-in to the telephonic survey.

Table 13 displays the outcomes of the GeoPoll CATI survey conducted in South Africa between October 11, and October 28, 2021. The survey yielded a total response rate of 36 percent and a total completion rate of 36 percent. This exceeded the stated goal for GeoPoll to obtain a 30 percent survey completion rate from the sample of phone numbers supplied.

Interviewers called each nonresponsive number five times before abandoning the number to align with accepted standards. However, given the size of this sample, enumerators did not have to exhaust each sample batch to reach the completed goal. Although respondents were given an option of two languages (Setswana or English) in which to respond, just 24 percent chose to respond in Setswana.

PHASE 4 – DATA TRANSMISSION AND DELIVERY

As with the educator CATI survey, GeoPoll cleaned all the data, merged it with the school identifiers available in the sample of phone numbers and returned it to Khulisa in an excel file.

PRODUCTION STATISTICS

Throughout the sixteen-day data collection for the Khulisa COVID-19 Parent Survey, GeoPoll sent approximately 5,389 survey invitations to South African parents and caregivers from schools as provided by Khulisa's database. This number of surveys sent was smaller than the 8,221 contacts in the sample because timelines did not allow GeoPoll to continue exhausting the sample. The number of surveys sent yielded approximately 1,942 opt-ins to the survey for an initial response rate of 36 percent. Of those who opted-in, 16 respondents were deemed ineligible due to age or not being a learner's parent/caregiver at an identified school. Of those eligible, 487 (36%) dropped-off at some point in the survey. There were 568 parents/caregivers in the sample that refused to take the survey and were not eligible for additional contact given this selection.

Table 13: Caregiver response rates

Production Statistics	Count	Percent
Surveys Sent	5,389	100%
Opt-ins	1,942	36%
Completed	1,925	36%
Drop-offs	1	0%
Ineligible	16	0%
Nonresponse	2,879	53%
Refusals	568	11%

Source: GeoPoll Caregiver Survey October 2021

ANALYSIS AND TRIANGULATION

A largely descriptive approach was used to evaluate the quantitative parent/caregiver COVID-19 survey data. The open-ended qualitative responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. The GEOPOLL Parent/Caregiver survey was triangulated with other data from the educator COVID-19 survey a learner COVID-19-questionnaire, district official COVID-19 interview, and a range of contextual tools which were administered when the Khulisa fieldwork team visited schools.

PARENT/CAREGIVER CATI CHALLENGES

An initial challenge to the Parent/Caregiver CATI survey prior to data collection was receiving the total client-based sample for the survey. Parent numbers were collected during school-based fieldwork and these numbers needed to be captured from hardcopy consent forms. However, GeoPoll worked with Khulisa and partners to take an approach in which batches of telephone numbers were sent to GeoPoll as data capturing was completed in stages. This allowed the survey enumerators to begin calling the sample. As GeoPoll received telephone numbers from Khulisa, they were added to the database and randomly assigned so that the data received was not a factor that would bias the data results.

Another challenge identified during the Parent/Caregiver CATI survey was pre-scheduled electricity outages in South Africa, which affected connectivity. As seen above, the nonresponse rate for the survey was quite high at 53 percent. Though 2,879 individuals did not answer their phone or were disconnected, a high number of these were discovered to occur during the first week of data collection due to these outages. Local enumerator supervisors did provide the context of the pre-

scheduled outages given the discovery of lower completes than expected per day. In order to mitigate extended timelines due to this, GeoPoll added two to four enumerators in the second week of data collection. Data delivery timelines were extended by two days.

GEOPOLL PARENT/CAREGIVER SURVEY RESPONSE RATES

Of the total sample of 1,925 completed GeoPoll Parent/Caregiver surveys, 95 percent could be linked to an EGRS I school. Table 14 illustrates the 191 individual schools are reflected in the final responses. Typically, 14 parents were surveyed per school, although this varies notably across the sample. In one school case, 39 Parent/Caregiver surveys were completed. At the 10th percentile, just four parent/caregiver surveys were completed in a school (Table 15).

Table 14: Summary of parent/caregiver responses and schools reflected

Total number of parent/caregiver surveys	1,925
Percentage of parent/caregiver surveys linked to a school	95%
Number of unique schools reflected	191

Source: GeoPoll Parent/Caregiver Survey October 2021

Table 15: Parent responses per school

	mean	p50	min	p10	p90	max	N
Parents surveyed per school	14.6	14	0	4	26	39	1,925
Parents of primary school learners surveyed per school	14.1	13	0	4	25	39	1,925

Source: GeoPoll Parent/Caregiver Survey October 2021

Although the parent sample spans most of the EGRS I schools, it remains a non-random sample. Table 16 provides the characteristics of the GeoPoll parent sample. Nearly 80 percent were women typically 35 years or older (63% of sample). Nearly half (49%) of the sample had at least a matric qualification, and 35 percent were in some form of employment. The parent/caregiver responses to the GeoPoll survey questions were not provided to a specific learner of a specific grade. Caution is thus warranted in attributing responses to a specific grade.

Parents may have responded concerning older or younger children in different grades. Almost all (96%) the parents had children in primary grades, where specifically 48 percent had children in the foundation phase, and 70 percent had children in grades 4 to 7. Of the parents, 22 percent also had children in secondary schools.

Table 16: Characteristics of the telephonic parent sample

		95% Confidence Interval	
	Mean	Lower	Upper
Female	79.1	77.2	80.9
Age: 18-24	5.1	4.1	6.1
Age: 25-34	32.2	30.1	34.2
Age: 35+	62.8	60.6	64.9
Has at least a matric	49.1	46.9	51.3
Is employed*	35.0	32.9	37.1
Has children in Grades 1-3	48.2	46.0	50.4
Has children in Grades 4-7	70.3	68.3	72.4
Has children in secondary (Grades 8-12)	22.3	20.4	24.1
Has children in primary (grades 1-7)	96.3	95.5	97.2
Number of children in household	2.9	2.8	2.9
Number of adults in household	3.0	2.9	3.0
Sample size	1,925		

Notes: *Self-employed, part-time or full-time employed.

Source: GeoPoll Parent/Caregiver Survey October 2021

Of the 1,925 respondents who completed the CATI survey well-being questions, 79% (1,522) were female, 21% (402) were male, and one respondent indicated other. Most parents were over 35 years of age (1,208, 63%) or between 25-34 years of age (619, 32%), while only 98 (5%) were between 18-24 years old. The mean age of parents was 39.85 (SD = 11.87). The sample of parents covered 193 schools.

Most parents had some high school but below Grade 11 (685, 36%) or a Grade 12 (697, 36%) level of education, while 12% (232) had a primary school level of education. Most respondents (1244, 65%) were not employed (946, 49%) or not employed but looking for work (298, 15%). Only 35% of respondents indicated having some form of employment, namely: full-time (379, 20%); part-time (213, 11%); or self-employed / generate income [e.g., Spaza/shop etc.] (82, 4%). Parents reported an average of 2,86 children (SD = 1.50) and 2.97 adults (SD = 1.69) living in the household.

Table 17: Parent/Caregiver GeoPoll sample description

		Count	Percent
Total sample		**1,925**	**100%**
Gender	Female	1,522	79%
	Male	402	21%
	Other	1	0%
Age group	18-24	98	5%
	25-34	619	32%
	35+	1,208	63%
Educational level	Primary Schooling	232	12%
	Below Grade 11	685	36%
	Grade 12 [matric]	697	36%
	Skills Certificate	83	4%
	Diploma	105	5%
	Bachelor's degree	44	2%
	Post graduate qualification	16	1%
	Other	33	2%
	DON'T KNOW	23	1%
	REFUSED	7	0%
Employment	Yes - full time	379	20%
	Yes - part time	213	11%
	Self-employed / generate income	82	4%
	Not employed	946	49%
	Not employed but looking for work	298	15%
	DON'T KNOW	2	0%
	REFUSED	5	0%
Children in household	Mean	2.86	-
	Min	0	-
	Max	11	-
Adults in household	Mean	2.97	-
	Min	1	
	Max	20	

SCHOOL-BASED DATA COLLECTION

In addition to the CATI surveys, contextual tools were administered to principals, Grade 3 and 7 teachers, Foundation Phase[13] HODs, parents/caregivers and learners from 229 Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS I)[14] schools in two districts in the North West (of which a subsample of 214 were Reading Support Project schools). Fifteen of the sample schools were only EGRS I schools, which meant that they did not participate in the RSP and therefore the only contextual data required from teachers was for Grade 7 teachers (since they had participated in the EGRS I). All schools are quintile 1-3 schools[15] and were visited in Term 3, 2021, between September 7 and 30 202.

[13] "Foundation Phase" refers to the phase of early Grade schooling from Grade R (similar to Kindergarten) and Grades 1 to 3.
[14] This is the fifth wave of data collection with the EGRS I schools, allowing comparison over time.
[15] See explanation of South African schools organized in quintiles in the Executive Summary.

The tools collected contextual data that relate to reading outcomes in schools, but these also had questions designed to respond to the COVID-19 research questions as per the Study Protocol and Methodology Plan. These data helped the evaluation team to triangulate across different sources and analyze the implications and impacts of COVID-19 on learners, teachers and school environments. In addition to these contextual tools, two tools were administered to determine educator and learner well-being. These tools are described in the sections below.

Data was collected using two main formats:

- Electronic surveys captured using tablets on two different software: Kobo Toolbox and Tangerine ®; and
- Paper-based forms.

FIELDWORKER TRAINING

Prior to data collection, fieldworkers were trained on all tools to be used. The six-day fieldwork training (22-27 August 2021) was held at a training venue in the North West province. It was led by the Fieldwork Manager, supported by the Evaluation Coordinators. The Khulisa COVID-19 Well-being Researcher trained fieldworkers on the learner well-being questionnaire, teacher well-being questionnaire and the distress protocol. The Khulisa Senior Monitoring Evaluation Research and Learning (MERL) Specialist (the mid-level project manager) took responsibility for training on the remainder of the contextual tools.

Khulisa held a school simulation day on Day 5 of the training. The purpose was to enable fieldwork teams to apply what they have learned in a real in-field simulation. This event was an opportunity to evaluate Fieldworkers to ensure that they are all able to adhere to the required data collection standards and comply with COVID-19 related health protocols.

The simulation day served as a last pilot/ pre-test point for all the tools, prior to the start of the school-based data collection. Minor revisions were made to the tools after the simulation.

Fieldworkers were assessed based on a number of surveys/quizzes administered throughout the training and their performance during the simulation day. The Khulisa team used results from the assessments to reinforce key messages from the training and adjust any re-training that was required. These assessments led to the final selection of fieldworkers.

SAMPLE

The team aimed to administer the tools in all 229 EGRS I schools (of which a subsample is RSP schools). The fieldwork was completed in 225 schools, as four schools could not be visited for the following reasons:

- In two of the schools, the principal was uncooperative. This was communicated with the DBE. They attempted to contact the school and were also unsuccessful.

- In one school there was a COVID-19 case during the initial planned visit, which forced the school to close and fieldworkers to leave the school. The school was rescheduled for another day but there was no municipal water at the school, forcing the school to send learners home and no data could be collected.

- For one school the fieldwork team drove there only to find a pig farm and were told the school had closed.

CONTEXTUAL TOOLS

Contextual tools were administered to principals, Grade 3 and 7 teachers, Foundation Phase HODs and parents in EGRS I schools in two districts in the North West Province. All schools are no-fee paying schools and were visited in Term 3, between September 7 and November 26, 2021.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The contextual tools were adapted from the set of contextual tools administered in prior EGRS I research in 2018. The tools were designed to collect contextual information that are pertinent to understanding reading outcomes in the schools that participated in the EGRS I and the RSP. To respond to the COVID-19 research questions as per the Study Protocol and Methodology Plan, the research team included questions in the contextual tools relating to the COVID-19 disruption in schools. The revised tools were initially piloted in six schools with similar characteristics as the intended sample of schools and adjusted as needed. During the fieldworker training and training simulations, the tools were further refined.

The contextual tools administered and analyzed for the purposes of this COVID-19 research are presented in the table below.

Table 18: List of Contextual Tools administered in schools

Tool	Data collection format
Principal Consent Form	Paper-based form
Principal Questionnaire	Kobo Toolbox
Teacher Consent Form	Paper-based form
Grade 3 Teacher Questionnaire	Kobo Toolbox
Grade 7 Teacher Questionnaire	Kobo Toolbox
Foundation Phase Head of Department Questionnaire	Kobo Toolbox
Classroom Observation / Learner workbook analysis	Kobo Toolbox
School Functionality Tool	Kobo Toolbox
Parent Survey (Questionnaire Form)	Paper-based form

Two additional tools were developed for the purposes of the research:

LEARNER WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE

The evaluation developed a learner well-being questionnaire to collect primary data from learners relating to their experience of COVID-19. The evaluation team extensively piloted and revised the learner well-being questionnaire over three rounds. This questionnaire was administered in Setswana to grade 4 and grade 7 learners directly after the learners completed the one-on-one assessment tasks which form part of the Early Grade Reading Assessment.

The learner well-being questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one contained four closed ended questions asking about learners' school attendance and completion of work on days they are not at school. Fieldworkers asked the questions in Setswana, and based on the learners' responses, they would select one answer option out of a list.

Section two consisted of three additional open-ended questions. The open-ended questions asked learners about general difficulties experienced in the past year, impressions on how they

experienced learning from home, and a question that specifically probed which sources of support learners rely on when they are worried or sad. The final questionnaire did not reference COVID-19 directly in the question about difficulties experienced in the past year, in order to limit the potential for psychosocial distress. Fieldworkers captured learners' answers verbatim in Setswana or directly translated them into English.

Fieldworkers administered section two questions to a small subset of the interviewed grade 4 and grade 7 learners. During the piloting of the tools, the evaluation team found that many learners were only able to articulate answers in one- or three-word sentences, which did not provide good insights into the thoughts of learners. Especially the younger learners struggled to articulate more detailed answers. An analysis of pilot data also showed that data saturation was achieved within a few responses. Therefore, it was decided not to collect responses from all learners.

Fieldworkers were instructed to ask the section two open-ended questions of learners who were able to articulate their answers in at least one full sentence until they reached a quota. Fieldworkers needed to collect detailed responses from three boys and three girls in each grade.

The fieldworkers took special care to look out for signs of psychosocial distress, and when this occurred, they implemented the steps as per the Psychosocial Distress Protocol.

EDUCATOR PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE

The Educator Psychosocial Well-being Questionnaire aimed to gather data on the stress that teachers and SMT members experienced due to COVID-19 and the support they received or would need to receive to manage that stress. The questionnaire was completed anonymously, and fieldworkers were instructed to hand out the paper-based questionnaire to as many educators as possible in each school.

The teacher well-being questionnaire consisted of open-ended and closed-ended questions. The first set of questions collected basic biographical information from teachers such as their sex, age, grades they are teaching, and whether they are an SMT member. The second set of questions included the items drawn from the PSS-10 modified for COVID-19 (PSS10-C). These were the same items used in the GeoPoll Educator CATI Survey. A third set of questions probed the support that teachers 1) received or 2) request to deal with the impact of COVID-19.

Since the data were collected on paper-based questionnaires, a data entry team entered the responses into a data entry system.

CONTEXTUAL TOOL RESPONSE RATES

The fieldwork team collected contextual data in 225 EGRS I schools (of which 210 were also RSP schools) but not all contextual tools were completed in all schools. There were a number of reasons for the incomplete data:

- Fifteen of the 225 schools were EGRS I only schools. This meant that no data was collected from Grade 3 teachers, Foundation Phase HODs and no classroom observations/learner workbook analysis were conducted, as these schools did not participate in the RSP.
- The Khulisa team emphasized that data collection for the learner language assessments should be prioritized, and if need be the contextual data could be rescheduled for a mop-up day.

- Person required to complete an interview (principal, deputy principal, foundation phase head of department, Grade 3 or 7 teacher) was unavailable due to being off sick, at a meeting/workshop or the post not being filled at the school.
- No time left during the data collection day(s) to complete the tool(s).
- Parents did not return the parent home questionnaires to the school.
- Fieldwork team was unable to return to the school to collect outstanding data

Table 19 below documents the number of tools completed at each school (all 9 tools in 60 schools and 8 tools in 75 schools, 7 in 45 schools, etc.).

Table 19: Tools collected per School

Number of Schools	60	75	45	20	8	7	6	2	2
Tools collected	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

When the data was analyzed in November 2021 (as the DBE required the results urgently), data from 222 schools were included in the analysis. Subsequently, data was collected from three additional schools (November 24 and 26). The team added this data and re-analyzed the learner well-being and educator psychosocial well-being data prior to the draft submission in January 2022.

After cleaning the data of duplicate questionnaires, incomplete questionnaires and multiple questionnaires from different teachers at the same school, we ended up with the numbers presented in Table 18 below.

Without a full realized sample of contextual tools at the school level, there is a limit to the analysis in that the same school samples are not always referred to in separate analyses presented, primarily where some contextual tools are provided from some schools, while others are not. For this reason, different school sample sizes are reflected across the report. Selective return patterns could result in biased results. The table below indicated the number of tools completed and also provides an indication of the number of schools represented in the data.

Table 20: Contextual tools completed, EGRS I data collection in Term 3 & Term 4, 2021

	Questionnaires returned	Number of schools	Number of potential schools at the time of analysis*
Principal survey	195	195	222
Grade 3 teacher	245	173	210
Grade 7 teacher	314	188	222
School functionality	190	190	222
Classroom observation	224	168	210
Foundation phase HOD	147	147	210
Parent/Caregiver Survey (questionnaire form)	2,888 (only 2,876 unique parents)	139	222
Learner well-being questionnaire	3,376	216	225
Educator psychosocial well-being questionnaire	1,217	182	225
Note: The number of potential schools does not account for schools where tool was not administered for reasons described previously			

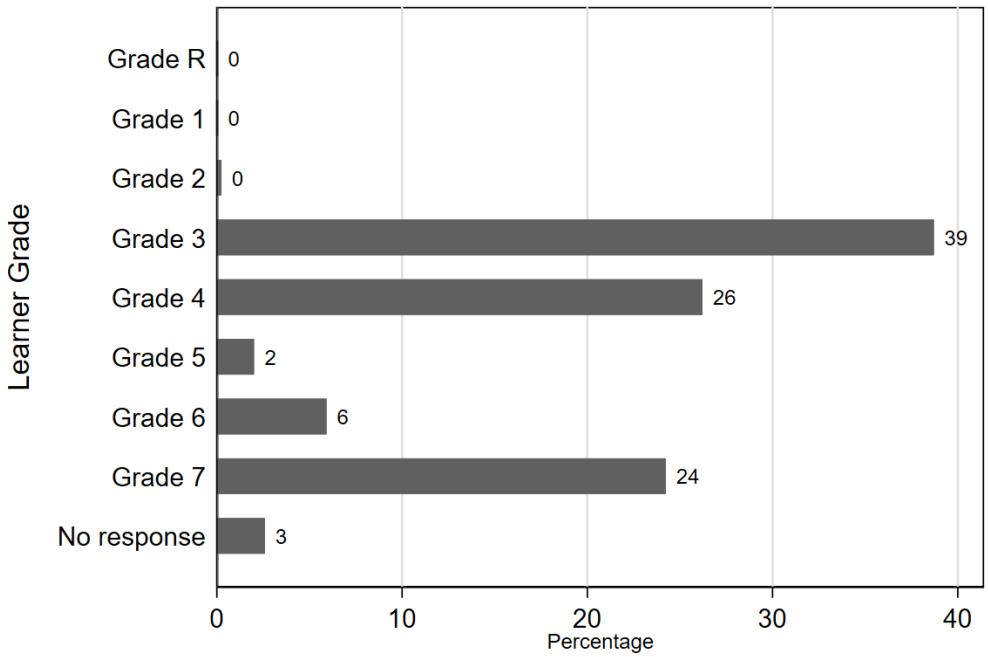
Interviews with 195 school principals were conducted (and principals were not available in the remaining 30 schools). The team successfully collected 245 Grade 3 teacher questionnaires in 173 schools (as not all schools have Grade 3 classes or were part of the 15 EGRS schools where data was collected for Grade 7 only), as well as 314 grade 7 teacher questionnaires in 188 schools (again, not all schools have a Grade 7 class). The school functionality forms were completed in 190 schools (the missing 35 schools were due to fieldworkers running out of time due to the need to complete learner testing). Only 147 Foundation Phase HOD surveys were collected (in some cases, schools did not have a HOD, in others, the HOD was not present).

Parent questionnaire forms were returned and completed by 2,888 parents (from 139 schools). The largest percentage of parent/caregiver responses was from Grade 3 parents (39%), followed by grade 4 parents (26%) and grade 7 parents (24%) (Figure 22). On average, 28 parent questionnaires were returned per school. However, responses ranged from 1 to 46 completed questionnaires per school.

Table 21: Parent/Caregiver Survey (questionnaire form) returned per school

	Mean	Min	p10	p50	p90	Max	N
Number of Parent/Caregiver Survey returns per school	28	1	13	29	41	46	2,888

Figure 22: Parent/Caregiver Survey – Child's current grade at school



Source: Parent survey, EGRS I wave 5.
Notes: Responses for 2888 parents from 139 unique schools

Altogether 3,376 **learner well-being tools** were completed. The sample included 1,572 female (47%) and 1,533 male (45%) respondents (271, 8% missing response). The mean age was 11.2, with a range of 6 years old to 19 years old. Most learners were in Grade 4 (1,424, 42%) or Grade 7 (1,325, 39%). Learners interviewed came from 216 schools. The largest percentage of learners were from two schools, 1.8% and 1.2% respectively.

Table 22: Learner sample description

		Count	Percent
Total sample		**3,376**	**100%**
Gender	Female	1,572	47%
	Male	1,533	45%
	Missing	271	8%
Age	Mean	11.2	
	Min	6	
	Max	19	
Grade	2	0	0%
	3	193	6%
	4	1,424	42%
	5	80	2%
	6	223	7%
	7	1,325	39%
	Missing	123	4%

Altogether, 1,217 educators from 182 schools responded to the **educator psychosocial well-being questionnaire**, of which 77 percent were female, 22 percent were male, and 1 percent other. Sixteen percent of educators were SMT members. This survey was administered to all educators available at the school on the day of fieldwork, irrespective of grade. The aim was to obtain responses from as many educators as possible. The majority taught Grade 7 (38%), followed by Grade 5 (33%), Grade 6 (32%) and Grade 4 (31%). The table below outlines the frequency and percent of educators per grade. Note that educators may teach more than one grade, hence overlapping may occur.

Table 23: Grade teacher sample for the educator psychosocial well-being survey

What grade/s do you teach	Count	Percent
Grade 0	83	7%
Grade 1	145	12%
Grade 2	136	11%
Grade 3	154	13%
Grade 4	378	31%
Grade 5	400	33%
Grade 6	388	32%
Grade 7	462	38%
Grade 8	25	2%
Grade 9	25	2%
Grade 10	16	1%
Grade 11	17	1%
Grade 12	15	1%
Not a teacher	43	4%

ANALYSIS AND TRIANGULATION

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

A descriptive approach was used to evaluate the quantitative data collected through the contextual tools. The primary analysis focused on the description of respondents' responses and explored between-group differences (e.g., gender). Correlational data analyses were used to establish the relationships between variables or between the same variable across groups (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Where applicable, inferential statistical analyses were conducted to examine the distribution of all variables, assess relationships between variables, and determine differences between groups.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data were thematically analyzed following six steps offered by Braun and Clarke (2012) The six steps are: 1) Familiarize oneself with the data, 2) Generate initial codes, 3) Search for themes, 4) Review potential themes, 5) Define and name themes, and 6) Produce the report.

DISTRICT OFFICIAL INTERVIEWS

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The evaluation team designed the district official key informant interview schedule to gain insight into key informants' perspectives and experiences of COVID-19; how it had affected them and their ability to fulfill their role; and how it had disrupted teaching and learning. The interview also probed officials' perception of support needs in schools. The instrument consisted of mostly open-ended questions. A senior fieldworker administered it telephonically.

INTERVIEW RESPONSE RATES

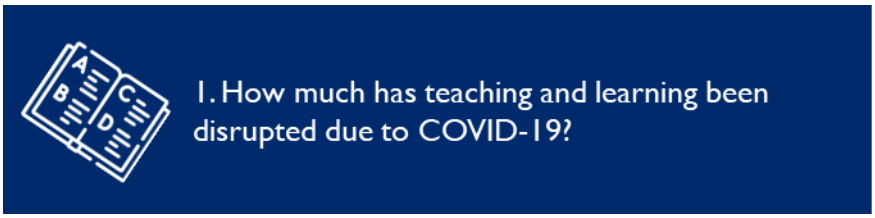
The Khulisa team conducted five key informant interviews with district officials in March 2021. These officials were involved with supporting the implementation of the EGRS I and the RSP. Initially, eight district officials were purposefully selected to participate in the study; however, one official had retired, one was not available for any of the proposed interview dates and the other official could not be reached.

ANALYSIS

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis approach as described in the contextual tool section.

APPENDIX 2: Detailed findings on COVID-19 Research Question 1

This section responds to the research question 1:



HOW MUCH CONTACT TIME HAVE LEARNERS LOST DUE TO THE COVID-19 SCHOOL DISRUPTIONS? (RQ 1.1)

To reopen schools in 2020 after the initial pandemic related closure of schools in March 2020, the DBE opted for two complementary models. The first was the phased-in approach to the returning of different grades and the second was a rotational model once grades had returned to school. A phased approach to Grade return supported the trialing of methods for social distancing and other COVID-19 safety protocols, while rotational models directly supported social distancing in schools.[16] The first grades to return to school were Grades 7 and 12, on June 8, 2020. Grades 6 and 11 were re-opened on July 6. However, due to rising national infection rates all grades were closed again for the week of July 27 – 30 in 2020. This was followed by a second round of phased reopening, with all grades expected to be back at school on August 31, 2020. We explore what this meant for lost contact teaching time in the first year of the pandemic, followed by providing estimates of lost contact teaching time in the second pandemic year (2021).

School days lost in the first year of the pandemic (2020)

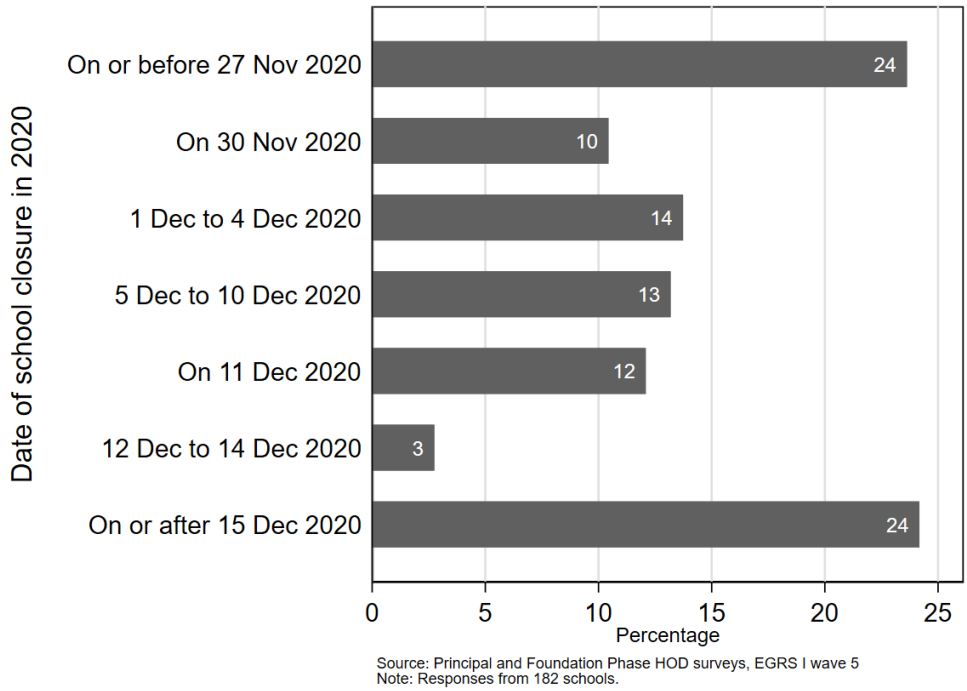
Ardington, Wills and Kotze (2021) provide an account of typical school days lost in no-fee schools in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga no-fee schools in 2020. Lost days of school days occurred not only due to direct school closures to curb COVID-19 infections, but because rotational schedules were applied in the majority of schools, typically reducing contact days by half. To make up some lost teaching time, schools were officially scheduled to close later than usual on 15 December 2020. However, many schools decided to close earlier than official school closure dates further reducing available contact teaching time. Ardington, Wills and Kotze (2021) after adjusting for rotations and discretionary early closures, identify that Grade 2 learners in the majority of Eastern Cape primary schools received just 40 percent of school days in 2020 relative to 2019, and in Mpumalanga no-fee schools, Grade 4 learners received at most 44 percent of schools days in 2020 relative to 2019. **In other words, as much as 56-60** percent **of available contact teaching days were lost in no-fee schools 2020.**

We identify similar estimates of lost contact teaching time in 2020 for Grade 3 and 7 learners in EGRS I schools in North West province. As can be seen from Table 24, as a percentage of 2019 official school days, the official available days of schooling *before* rotations and discretionary early closures was just 67 percent and 79 percent for Grades 3 and 7 respectively. However, many schools closed well before the 15 December 2020 official date. **Of 182 EGRS I schools, for**

[16] End of phase grades, such as Grade 7 and 12 were prioritized over other grades.

which we have reported information on last date of school attendance, three quarters closed before Friday 15 December 2020. Nearly a quarter (24%) closed at least three weeks earlier on or before 27 November 2020 as seen in Figure 23. Most schools also applied rotational schedules. As discussed later, in Term 4 of 2020 about 86 percent of (133) schools implemented rotations for Grade 3 learners while 76 percent of (179) schools implemented rotations for Grade 7s. After accounting for early discretionary closures and rotational schedules, Grade 3 learners on average would have had just 44 percent of school days in 2019 while Grade 7 learners received at a maximum just 51 percent of 2019 official school days. **Expressed differently, relative to a pre-COVID-19 year, Grade 3 learners on average lost 56** percent **of contact school days in 2020 while Grade 7 learners on average lost 49** percent **of contact school days in the same year.**

Figure 23: Last day of school in 2020 according to Principal or Foundation Phase HOD



Source: Principal and Foundation Phase HOD surveys, EGRS I wave 5
Note: Responses from 182 schools.

Table 24: School days in 2020 in EGRS I schools

		North West (EGRS I): Grade 3			North West (EGRS I): Grade 7		
Term	Dates	Maximum possible school days per DBE regulations	Average school days after accounting for discretionary early school closure in term 4	Average school days taking rotational and early closures into account	Maximum possible school days per DBE regulations	Average school days after accounting for discretionary early school closure in term 4	Average school days taking rotational and early closures into account
1	15 Jan – 18 Mar	46	46	46	46	46	46
2	8 Jun – 24 Jul	10	10	5	34	34	17
3	24 Aug – 23 Oct	45	45	23	45	45	23
4	2 Nov - 15 Dec	32	24*	14*	32	24*	15*
Total school days		133	125	88	157	149	101
% of 2019* days (199 days)		67%	63%	44%	79%	75%	51%
% of 2019 school days **lost**				56%			49%

Notes: ^Median days open in Term 4 of 2020 for 177 EGRS I schools. Derived from a principal question on the last day of school in 2020.
^^Median days open in Term 4 of 2020 after accounting for rotational schedules.
*Many schools were probably closing earlier than official school closure dates pre-COVID-19 so that 199 days in 2019 of school probably overestimates days at school that year. *Average derived from data for 106 EGRS I schools.

A second wave of COVID-19 infections set in from about December 2020. After a period of reduced lockdown measures, restrictions were again reinforced, and decisions were made to delay the start of the 2021 school year. Initially, learners were meant to return on 27 January, but the return to school was delayed to 15 February. Most schools returned with rotational attendance schedules in place due to regulations still requiring social distancing of 1.5 meters per learner. With

the relaxing of this restriction to one meter, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga announced that as on 26 July 2021, all primary learners (grades R to 7) would attend school daily. In reality, however, a rotational system remains widely used across primary schools. Since the return of learners to school in the second half of 2020, there has been a gradual improvement in the proportion of schools in the sample that have returned to normal attendance scheduling where all learners attend every day, although **we show how extensive the problem of rotational scheduling remains in the second half of 2021.**

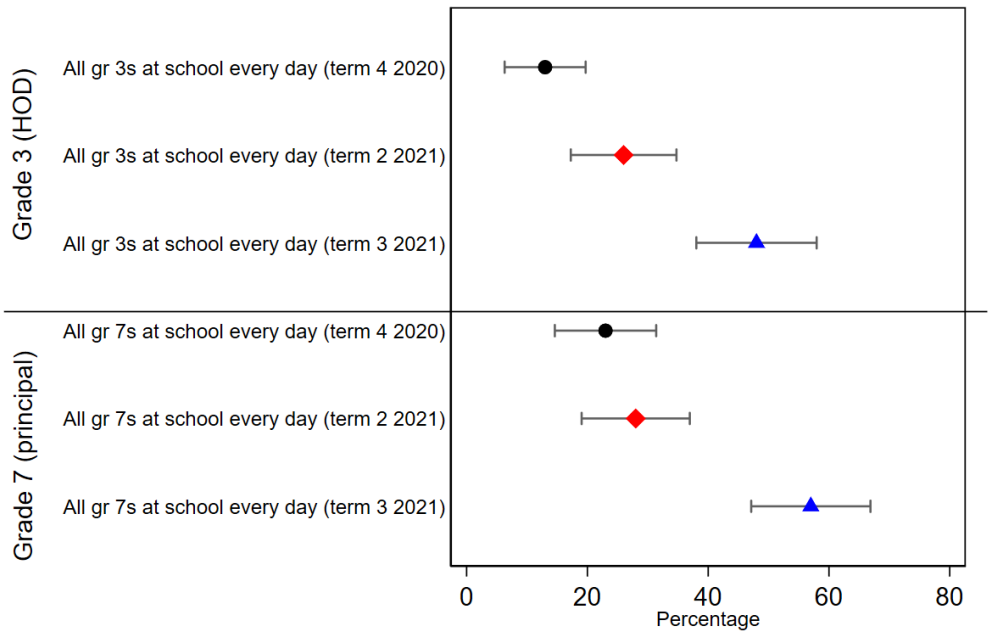
The return to daily attendance into 2021

We compare attendance scheduling for school samples for which we have data reports on timetabling schedules for terms 4 of 2020, Term 2 of 2021 and Term 3 of 2021. At the Grade 3 level, foundation phase HOD reports for 130 schools indicate that just 14 percent of these schools were on normal daily schedules in the last term of 2020 as seen in Figure 24 . By Term 2 of 2021, this had increased (albeit not significantly) to 27 percent in the same schools. After the daily return to schools was announced for the end of July 2021, just half of the same schools reported daily attendance for Grade 3 learners in Term 3 of 2021.

Reports on scheduling approaches used for Grade 7s, as indicated by 160 principals in 160 schools, suggests that in Term 4 of 2020, just less than a quarter were implementing normal daily schedules, rising slightly to 31 percent by Term 2 of 2021 and remaining constrained at 56 percent in Term 3 of 2021. The most common rotational schedule applied at the Grade 3 and 7 level in these North West Province schools across all terms, has been children attending on alternate days of the week.

If we restrict the sample in Figure 24 to the exact same schools for which we have scheduling responses for grades 3 and 7, **there is some evidence that schools were slightly more likely to adopt normal daily scheduling for Grade 7 learners than for Grade 3 learners even though Grade 3 learners lost more days of school in 2020 compared to Grade 7s.**

Figure 24: Daily Attendance School Scheduling Adopted for Grades 3 and 7



Source: Principal and Foundation Phase HOD survey. EGRS I, wave 5.
Notes: Responses for grade 3 from 130 HODs in 130 schools.
Grade 7 responses from 160 principals in 160 schools.

It is also notable that the type of scheduling adopted may be neither consistent across the phases, nor within a phase. Among schools[17] where Grade 7 learners were on daily attendance schedules in Term 2 of 2021, 58 percent applied rotational schedules for Grade 3 (as indicated by the Foundation Phase HOD). The scheduling plans across grades 7 and 3 appear to be more consistent by Term 3 of 2021. Among schools[18] where Grade 7 learners were on normal daily schedules, 29 percent were still on a rotational schedule for Grade 3. Within a phase, there may also be variations in scheduling plans chosen across grades. For example, in Term 4 of 2020, of 133 Foundation Phase HODS that responded to these questions, a third indicated that they did not 'adopt the same timetabling model for grades 1-3'.[19]

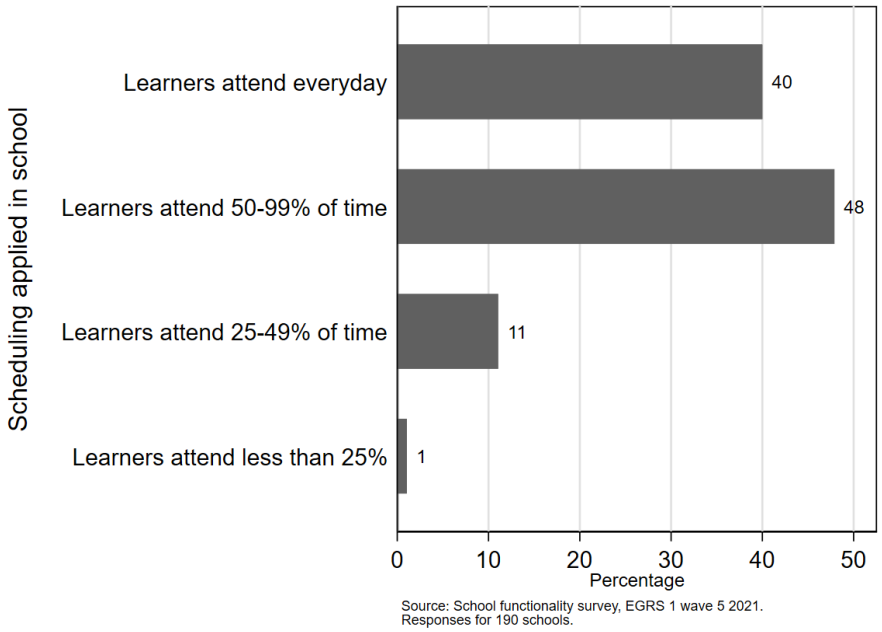
Although the Foundation Phase HOD and Principal questionnaires allow for a comparison of responses on schedules applied across different terms, arguably the most reliable source of information on attendance schedules, but only asked for the current term, comes from the school functionality tool. Here fieldworkers were asked to identify the attendance schedule used at the school during the term 3, 2021 fieldwork visit. As identified from 190 schools, 40 percent were applying a daily attendance schedule in Term 3 of 2021 as determined by the fieldworker (i.e., 60% were still on a rotational schedule as seen in Figure 25). For schools where a school functionality tool was not collected, but caregivers, principals or HODs answered such a question, we deduce across questionnaires that among 218 schools, 44 percent still applied a daily attendance schedule in Term 3 of 2021. These findings are roughly in line with patterns observed in no-fee schools in Limpopo Province. In 120 Funda Wande impact evaluation schools in Limpopo, Ardington and Henry (2021) find that in Term 3 of 2021, 48 percent of these schools reported daily attendance of all learners. This compares to 10 percent in terms 1 and 2 of 2021.

We conclude that eighteen months after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa contact teaching time is still compromised due to rotational systems in almost two thirds of this North West Province no-fee primary school sample.

Interestingly, principals and HODs tend to be more likely to indicate that daily attendance was being applied than what is observed by the fieldworker. **Caregivers of learners in the same school and same grade can also differ notably in their response as to the type of attendance schedule applied which is itself a concern, implying confusion about when children should be going to school.**

[17] Data reports for both Grade 7 learners (from principals who responded to Principal Questionnaire) and Grade 3 learners (from Foundation Phase HODs who responded to Foundation Phase HOD questionnaire) available for 114 schools.
[18] Data reports for both Grade 7 learners (from principals who responded to Principal Questionnaire) and Grade 3 learners (from Foundation Phase HODs who responded to Foundation Phase HOD questionnaire) available for 114 schools.
[19] It is possible, however, that HODs do not view 'timetabling' within the same concept as rotational scheduling. A 'timetable' may refer to the daily lesson schedules for the day, while others may refer to this as rotational or daily attending scheduling systems.

Figure 25: Scheduling applied in the school on the day of the visit in Term 3, 2021



Source: School functionality survey, EGRS 1 wave 5 2021.
Responses for 190 schools.

School days lost in the second year of the pandemic (2021)

The situation in 2021 improved somewhat with respect to available time for teaching, but contact schooling time remains substantially less than pre-COVID-19 (e.g., 2019) due to the continued use of rotations. Estimates of schooling days in 2021 are shown in Table 25. To account for schools' discretionary decisions to close early, we impose the same patterns of early closure for 2020 on the year 2021. After accounting for rotational timetabling as discussed above and discretionary early school closures, **we estimate that in 2021 Grades 3 and 7 in the North West no-fee school sample would have lost on average 36** percent **and 34** percent **of school days relative to official school days in 2019.**

It is noted that unplanned school closures for other reasons (e.g., water cuts, COVID-19 cases) also further exacerbate the problem of lost contact time in school as seen in the last row of Table 25. **Effort should be given to reduce any chances of unplanned school closures – including ensuring a constant municipal supply of services. This is clearly an additional disruption risk for schooling.** On the day of the survey visits, for example, fieldworker reports for 17 of 190 North West schools (9%) indicated that there was no running water at the school that day. For a third of school principals from 192 schools, disruptions to schooling were a problem to some extent (either a small, big or very big problem).

Table 25: School days in 2021 for Grade 3 and 7 learners

		North West (EGRS I): Grade 3			North West (EGRS I): Grade 7		
Term	Dates	Maximum possible school days per DBE regulations	Typical school days after accounting for discretionary early school closure in term 4	Average school days taking rotational and early closures in Term 4 into account	Maximum possible school days per DBE regulations	Typical school days after accounting for discretionary early school closure in term 4	Average school days taking rotational and early closures in Term 4 into account
1	15 Feb– 23 Apr	47	47	30*	47	47	30*
2	3 May - 9 July	49	49	32*	49	49	32*
3	26 July - 1 Oct	48	48	36*	48	48	37*
4	11 Oct - 15 Dec	48	41*	30*	48	41*	32*
Total school days		192	185	128	192	185	131
% of 2019* days (199 days)				64%			66%
% of 2019 school days **lost**				36%			34%
Average school days after other school closures reported				126			127
% of 2019 school days **lost**				37%			36%

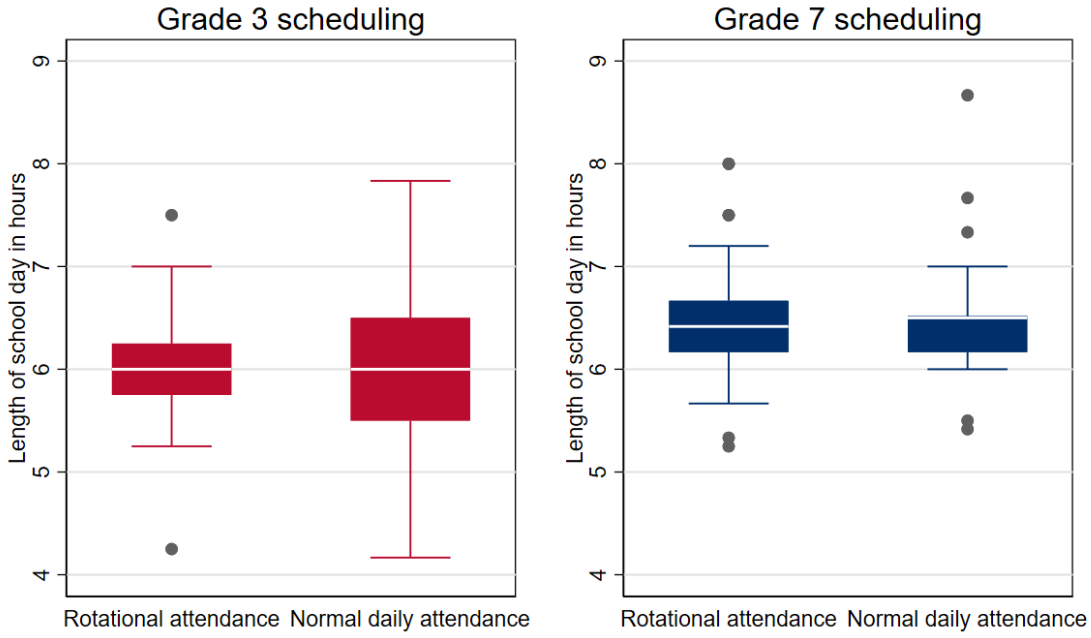
Notes: Grade 3 and 7 estimates for 106 EGRS I schools with information on rotational schedules by Grade and school closure dates for 2020. School closure dates reported by the principal in 2020 are used to estimate school days open in term 4. Rotational schedules in 2021 are known for terms 3 and 2. Terms 2 schedules are applied to term 1, while Term 3 schedules are applied to term 4. Principals also identified the number of days the school had been closed for reasons other than COVID-19. *Averages from data for 107 EGRS I schools. Maximum school days from school calendar (see https://www.education.gov.za/portals/0/documents/publications/Approved%20Final%20%20School%20Calender%202021.pdf)

Contact hours at school in Term 3 of 2021

If learners go to school on alternative days or on a 'one-week on, one-week off' basis, then potential learning time is halved. But some schools could extend or adjust the school day in lieu of disruptions to learning, though we find little evidence of this. In this section, we explore **what rotational timetabling mean in terms of hours of potential schooling learners could receive.**

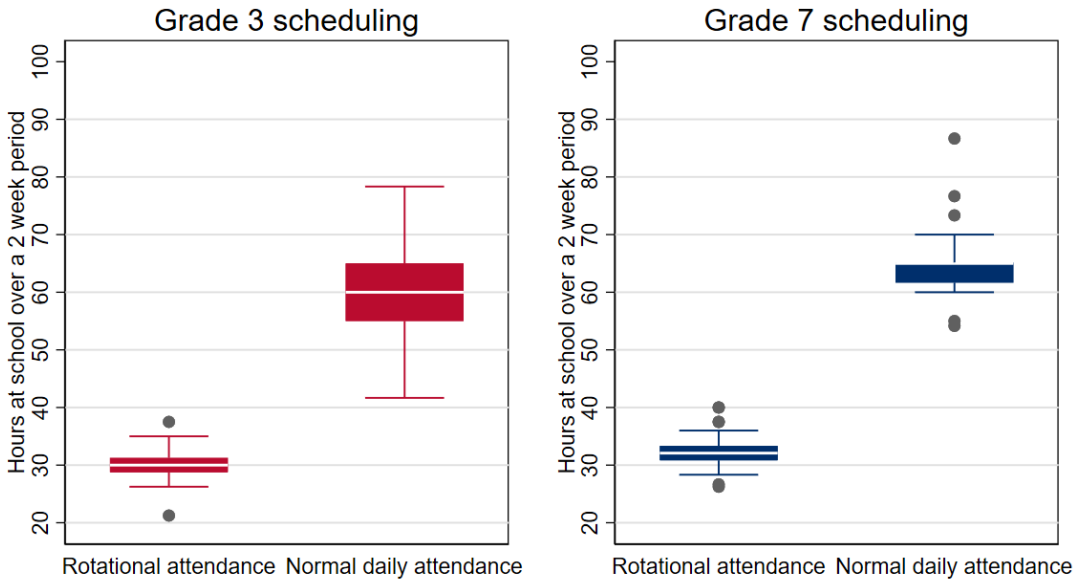
Principals and Foundation Phase HODs were asked about when the school day started after registration and sanitization, and when it ended, for Grade 3 and 7 learners respectively. Using this information and applying assumptions about lost days over 2 weeks using reports on rotational scheduling, we can construct information on hours learners typically spend at school over a 2-week period. We find that the length of school days for grades 3 and 7 do not differ much across schools implementing rotational or normal 'everyday' attendance schedules as seen in Figure 26. On average the reported school day length is 6.0 hours for Grade 3 learners and 6.4 hours for Grade 7s. However, when halving the hours of schooling over a 2-week period for schools implementing rotational schedules, the stark implications for maximum available school time are observed Figure 27. **For Grade 3 learners across 144 schools, those in schools with rotational schedules would be at school for just 30 hours over a 2-week period, compared to 60 hours of school time for learners in schools on daily attendance schedules. For Grade 7 learners across 154 schools, those in schools with rotational schedules could attend for 32 hours over a 2-week period compared with 64 hours in schools applying normal daily schedules.**

Figure 26: School day length registration/sanitization by scheduling approach Term 3, 2021



Source: Foundation phase HOD and principal surveys, EGRS wave 5.
Notes: Grade 3 responses for 147 HODs from 147 schools.
Grade 7 responses for 157 principals from 157 schools.
Average school hours per day for grade 3s in term 3 2021, regardless of scheduling = 6.04 hours.
Average school hours per day for grade 7s in term 3 2021, regardless of scheduling = 6.43 hours.

Figure 27: Maximum hours of school time (after sanitization and registration) in Term 3, 2021



Source: Foundation phase HOD and principal surveys, EGRS wave 5.
Notes: Grade 3 responses for 144 HODs from 144 schools.
Grade 7 responses for 154 principals from 154 schools.
Average hours at school over 2 weeks for grade 3s in term 3 2021, full time schedules = 59.92 hours.
Average hours at school over 2 weeks for grade 3s in term 3 2021, rotational schedules = 30.15 hours.
Average hours at school over 2 weeks for grade 7s in term 3 2021, full time schedules = 64.33 hours.
Average hours at school over 2 weeks for grade 7s in term 3 2021, rotational schedules = 32.18 hours.

Absenteeism and non-return to school

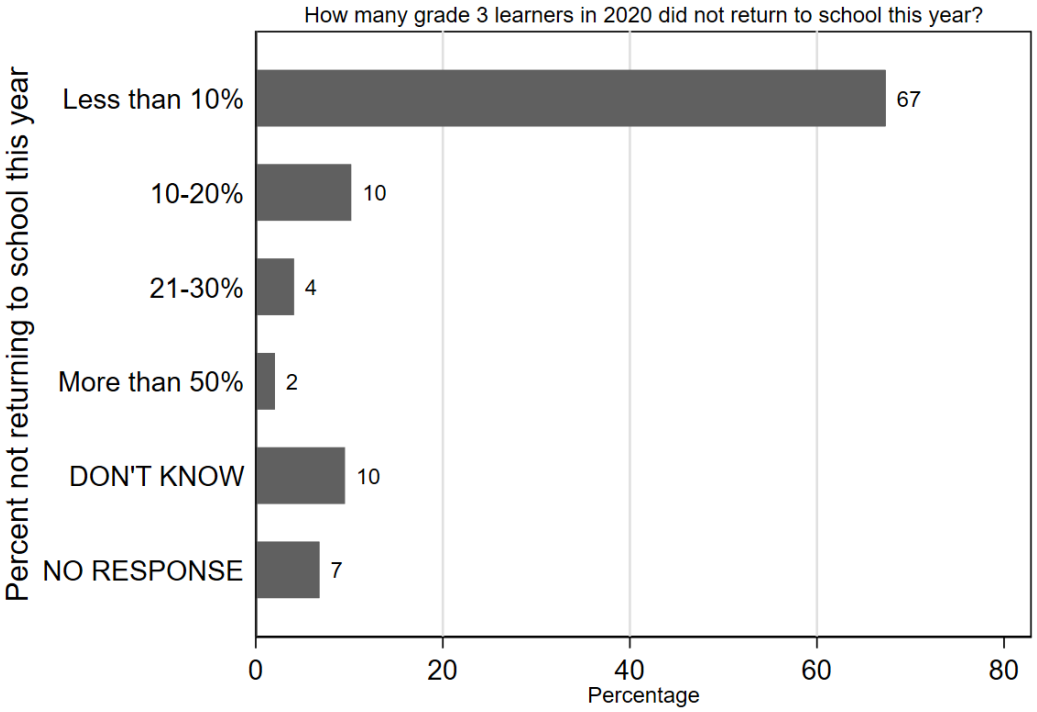
During the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns have been raised globally about the implications of school disruptions and fears of infection for learner drop-out and absenteeism (Azevedo et al., 2020; Smith, 2021; Lichand et al., 2021). Absenteeism can exacerbate the problem of lost contact teaching time while learner drop-out has major implications for children's well-being and life-long success. While we are unable to observe patterns of drop-out in the data collected for this study, we identify to what extent the non-return of learners to school is a problem and explore how learner absenteeism has changed over the pandemic period.

Non-return to school

Analyzing 2021 national enrolment data as per SA-SAMS, Gustafsson (2021) estimates that around 27,000 young children have not enrolled as first-time learners in Grade R or Grade 1, while up to 19,000 fewer learners of compulsory school-going were enrolled in 2021. In a sample of 57 Eastern Cape no-fee schools, Ardington et al., (2021) identify that between the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2021, 15 percent of sampled learners left the school. Of these learners, 29 percent were reported as having dropped out and were not attending school at all. On average teachers in those schools reported that of Grade 2 learners, 9 percent never returned in the 2021 school year.

We do not have comparable questions for the North West no-fee schools. However, it is possible to deduce that non-return of children to schools in these schools was prevalent. Across 147 schools, for which there is data on this reported by Foundation Phase HODs, in at least 16 percent more than 10 percent of Grade 3 learners are reported as having not returned to school in 2021 (see Figure 28).

Figure 28: How many Grade 3 learners in 2020 did not return to school this year?



Source: Foundation phase HOD, EGRS wave 5. Responses for 147 schools.

Absenteeism

Learner absenteeism as a construct has been redefined in the presence of rotational systems of attendance. Thus, identifying the extent to which learners have been absent from school is not a simple task. Nevertheless, we can get a sense from the various contextual tools whether learner (and teacher) absenteeism is more prevalent relative to before COVID-19; whether this absenteeism is more prevalent in schools on rotational systems and reasons for learner absenteeism during the pandemic.

Is learner absenteeism worse now compared to before COVID-19? Indeed, a significant proportion of SMT members perceive that learner absenteeism has deteriorated compared to before the pandemic as seen in Figure 29. Across 147 Foundation Phase HODs, 41 percent say that learners are a lot more absent now than before COVID-19 while 24 percent indicate they are a little more absent. L**earner absenteeism is perceived to have deteriorated, relative to before COVID-19, in 63** percent of 147 schools. However, a further 23 percent believe learners are absent less often.

In comparison to perceptions of learner absenteeism, Foundation Phase HODs are much more likely to indicate that teacher absenteeism has improved now compared to before COVID-19, with nearly half (48%) saying that teachers are absent less often, while a further 17 percent say teacher absenteeism has stayed the same. Among 32 percent of the 147 schools reflected in these responses, teacher absenteeism is perceived to have gotten worse (absent a 'lot more' or absent a 'little more').

Figure 29: Learner and Teacher Absenteeism Compared to before COVID-19

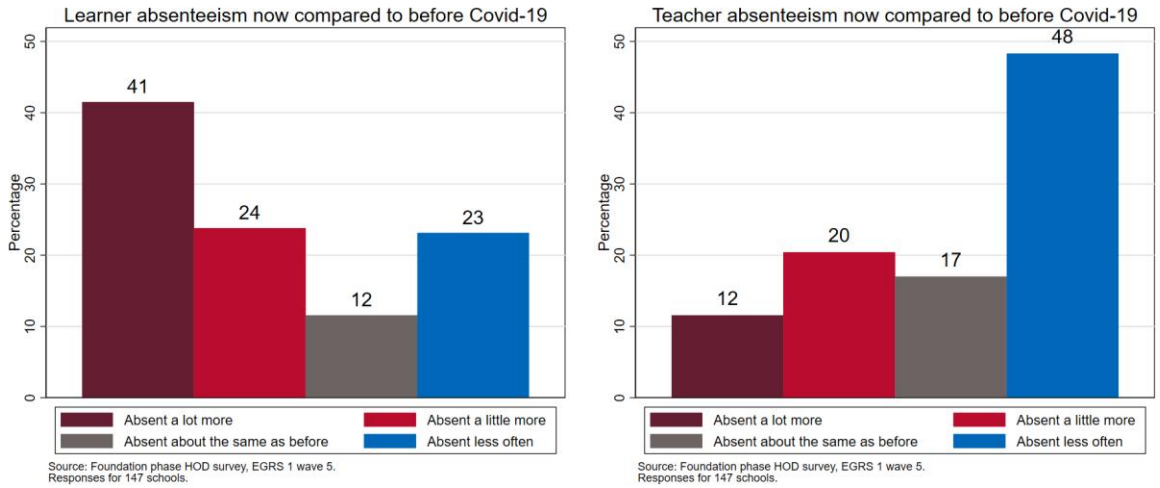
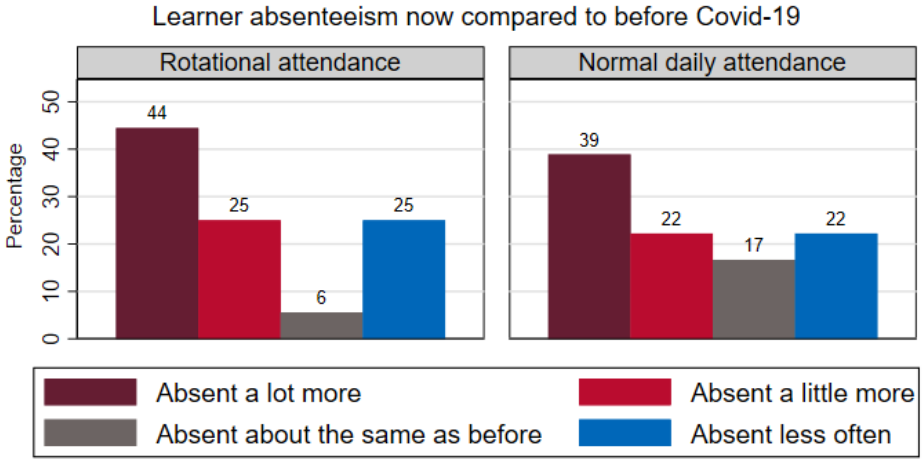
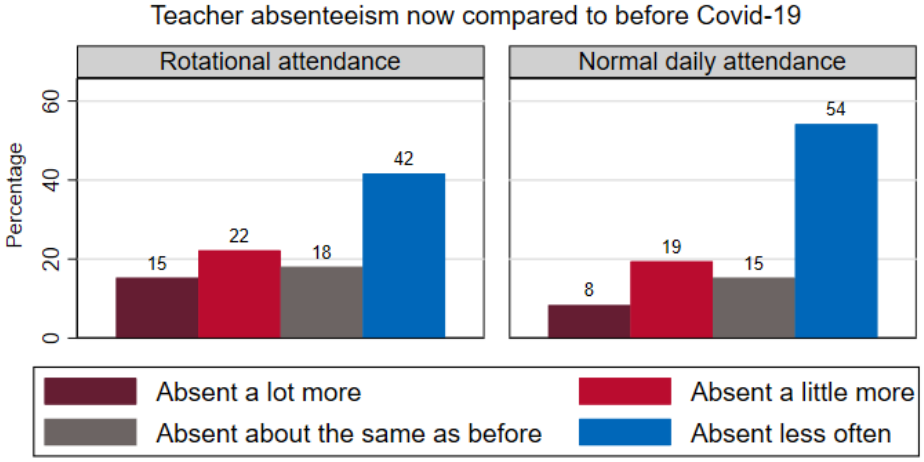


Figure 30 indicates that perceptions of how learner absenteeism has changed relative to before the pandemic does not differ very much by the attendance schedule followed by the school. The same figures show that changes in teacher absenteeism appear to be slightly worse where schools follow rotational schedules relative to daily attendance schedules, though on average these differences are not statistically significantly different.

Figure 30: Learner and Teacher Absenteeism Compared to before COVID-19



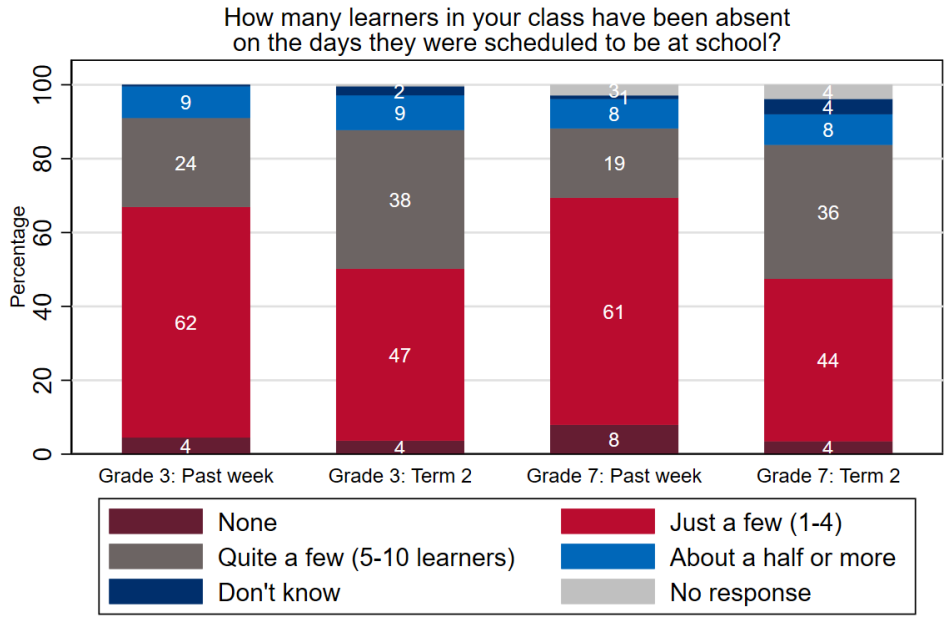
Source: Foundation phase HOD survey, EGRS 1 wave 5.
Responses for 147 schools.



Source: Foundation phase HOD survey, EGRS 1 wave 5.
Responses for 147 schools.

While learner absenteeism may be worse now compared to before COVID-19, between Term 2 and 3 of 2021 attendance had improved. Reports from 245 Grade 3 teachers and 314 Grade 7 teachers indicate that absenteeism in the past week (Term 3 of 2021) was somewhat better than absenteeism in Term 2 of 2021 as seen in Figure 31. Compared to Term 2 of 2021, teachers are more likely to report that 'just a few (1-4)' learners in their class are absent on the days they were scheduled to be at school and are less likely to report that 'quite a few (5-10 learners)' are absent on days they are scheduled to attend. **We find that improvements in learner attendance is not just due to more schools shifting from rotational systems to normal daily attendance.** If we limit the sample to teacher reports for schools that implemented rotational schedules in both terms 2 and 3 of 2021 (or normal schedules in terms 2 and 3), we find no difference in absenteeism reports. These patterns also do not vary much by whether rotational scheduling in the school is observed by the fieldworker.

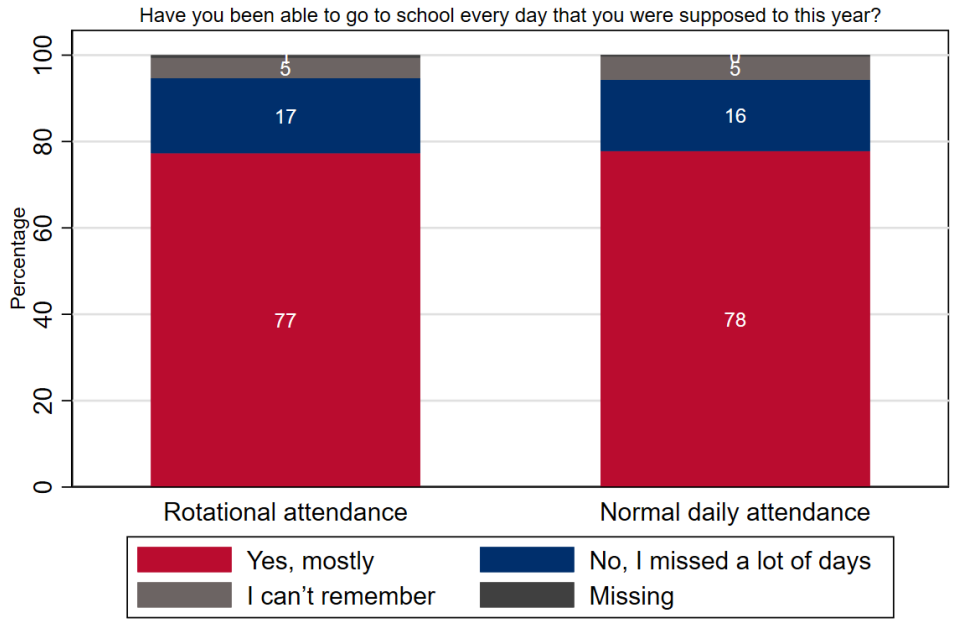
Figure 31: Learner absenteeism in the Past Week or Term 3, 2021 and in Term 2, 2021



Source: Grade 3 and 7 teacher surveys, EGRS I wave 5.
Responses for 204 schools.

Similarly, a subset of learners (predominately in grades 4 and 7) were asked to self-report about their own absenteeism, identifying whether they have been able to go to school every day that they were supposed to this year. Possible response options were "Yes, mostly", "No, I missed a lot of days" and "I can't remember". **Of 3 129 primary school learners across 215 schools, 16** percent **indicated that they had "missed a lot of days" this year. Neither does this pattern vary by whether rotational systems are applied or not** (see Figure 32), nor does it vary by the learner's grade. Table 26 shows that for the learner sample that missed a lot of days at school, **the main reasons for being absent were sickness (44%) followed by being afraid of getting COVID-19 (28%).**

Figure 32: Learner Self-Reported Absenteeism



Source: Learner well-being questionnaire.
Notes: Responses from 3129 primary school learners from 215 schools.

Table 26: Learners' self-reported reasons for absenteeism

		95% confidence interval	
	Mean (%)	Lower	Upper
I was afraid I may get COVID-19	28%	24.1	31.8
Didn't have money for transport	6%	4.1	8.2
I was sick	44%	39.7	48.1
Caregiver or family said I must stay home	7%	5.1	9.5
Confused about which days I must come to school	7%	4.5	8.7
Had not done the work I was supposed to do at home	2%	0.6	2.8
Other	9%	6.2	11.0
N	**533**		

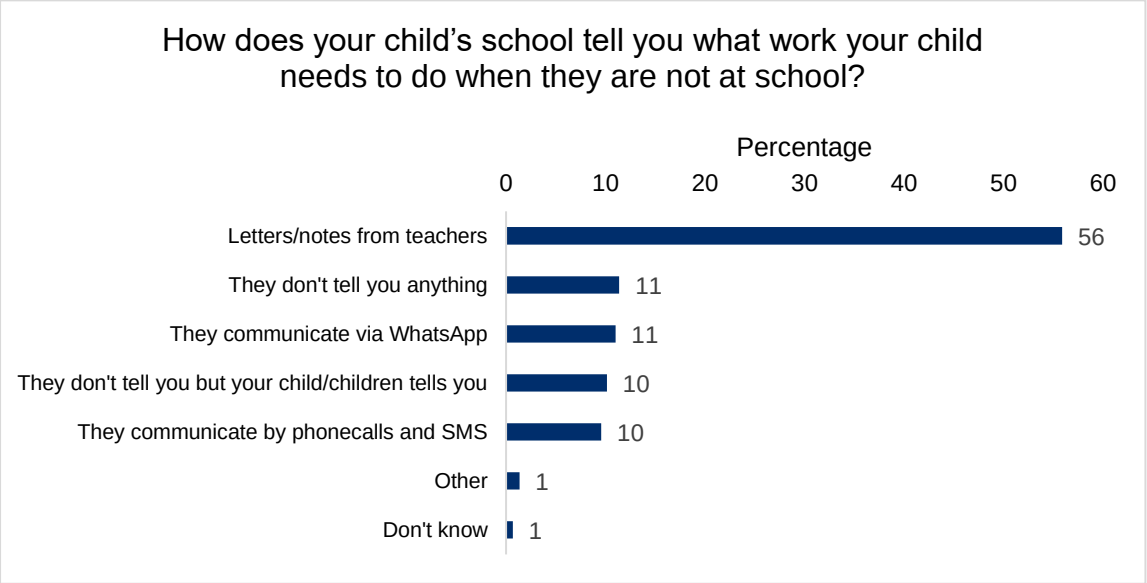
Source: Learner well-being questionnaire (mostly Grade 4 and 7 learners), EGRS I, Wave 5. Reasons provided by learners for why they reported that they had missed lot of days in response to the question "Have you been able to go to school every day that you were supposed* to this year?"

What response was implemented by schools, teachers, and caregivers to support learning during the lockdown period, and after schooling resumed? (RQ 1.2)

When the pandemic was declared in 2020 and countries began planning the provision of remote schooling, many commentators warned that remote schooling would not be a feasible solution in developing countries, given limited access to the internet (Gustafsson and Nuga-Deliwe, 2020). Since access to the internet is skewed in favor of wealthier households, issues of fairness were also raised. Essentially, the concern was that online teaching would not be feasible to support remote learning in most developing countries.

Responses from the GeoPoll survey of 1 926 caregivers from 195 schools confirm these concerns, indicating that the main strategy employed by schools to support learning during the lockdown period and after schooling resumed was to send work home with learners**.** The **main mode of communication with caregivers was for teachers to send home letters or notes, with 56** percent **of caregivers indicating that this was how they were informed about what schoolwork their children needed to do at home** (Figure 33). Worryingly, **11** percent **of caregivers indicated that their child's school did not tell them anything about their children's schoolwork**, while a further 10 percent indicated that they did not receive direct communication from the school but that their children knew what work they needed to do. Together, a further 20 percent of caregivers indicated that teachers communicated either via WhatsApp, phone calls, or SMS.

Figure 33: Communication Modes between Schools and Caregivers

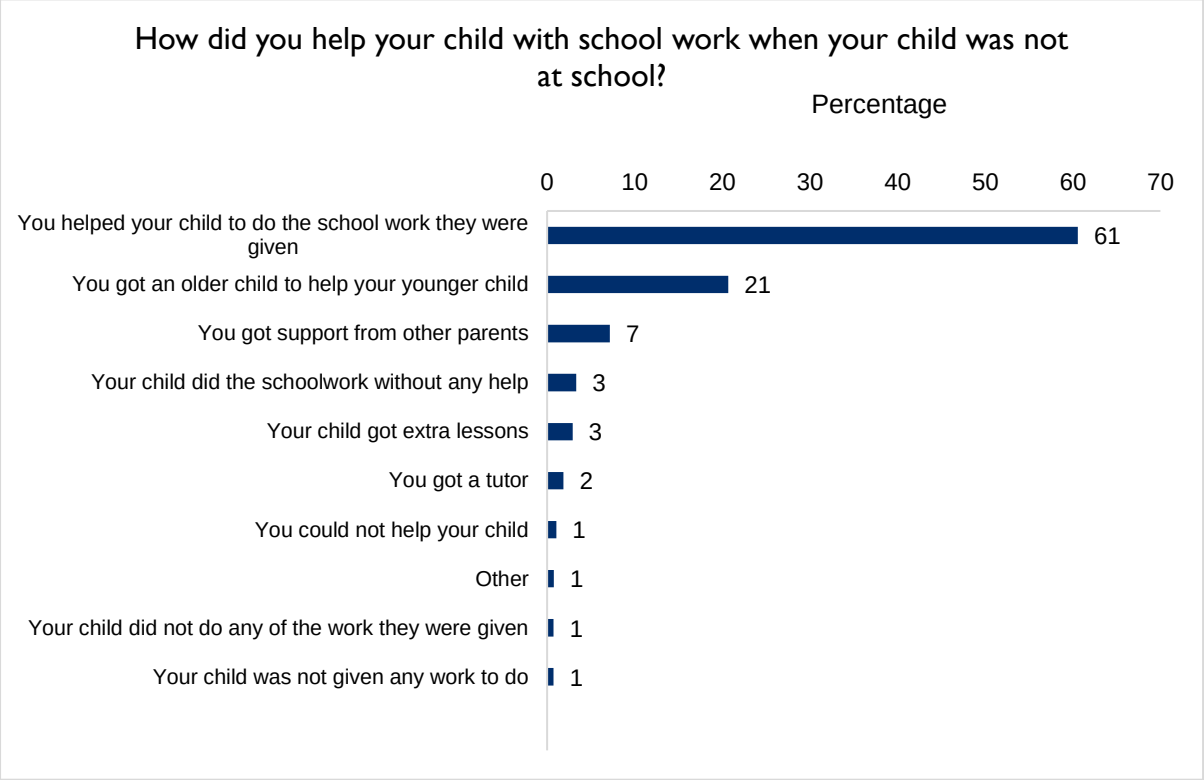


Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. Notes: Responses from 1,925 caregivers from 191 schools. Single response option.

Caregivers were also asked how they supported their children's learning at home in the telephonic interviews. The responses to this question are plotted in Figure 34. **The largest share of caregivers (61%) indicated that they helped their children to do the schoolwork they were given. The next-most common response was for caregivers to get older siblings to help younger children with their schoolwork (21%).** When asked about the challenges caregivers faced in terms of supporting their children's learning at home, about a quarter reported

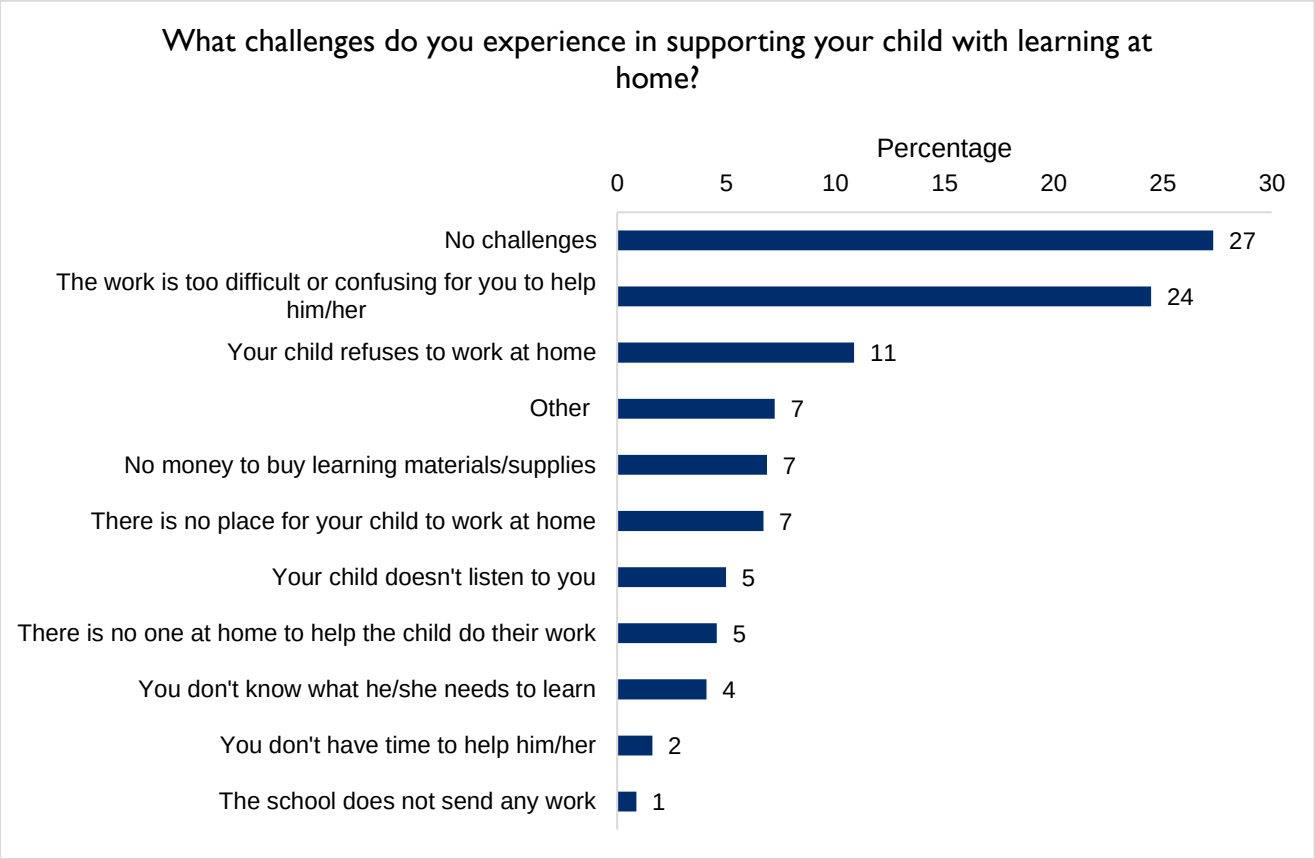
that they faced no challenges (27%), while another **quarter indicated that the work was too difficult or confusing for caregivers to help their children with the work (**Figure 35).

Figure 34: Caregivers Support for Learning at Home



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. Notes: Responses from 1,925 caregivers from 191 schools. Multiple response options allowed for this question.

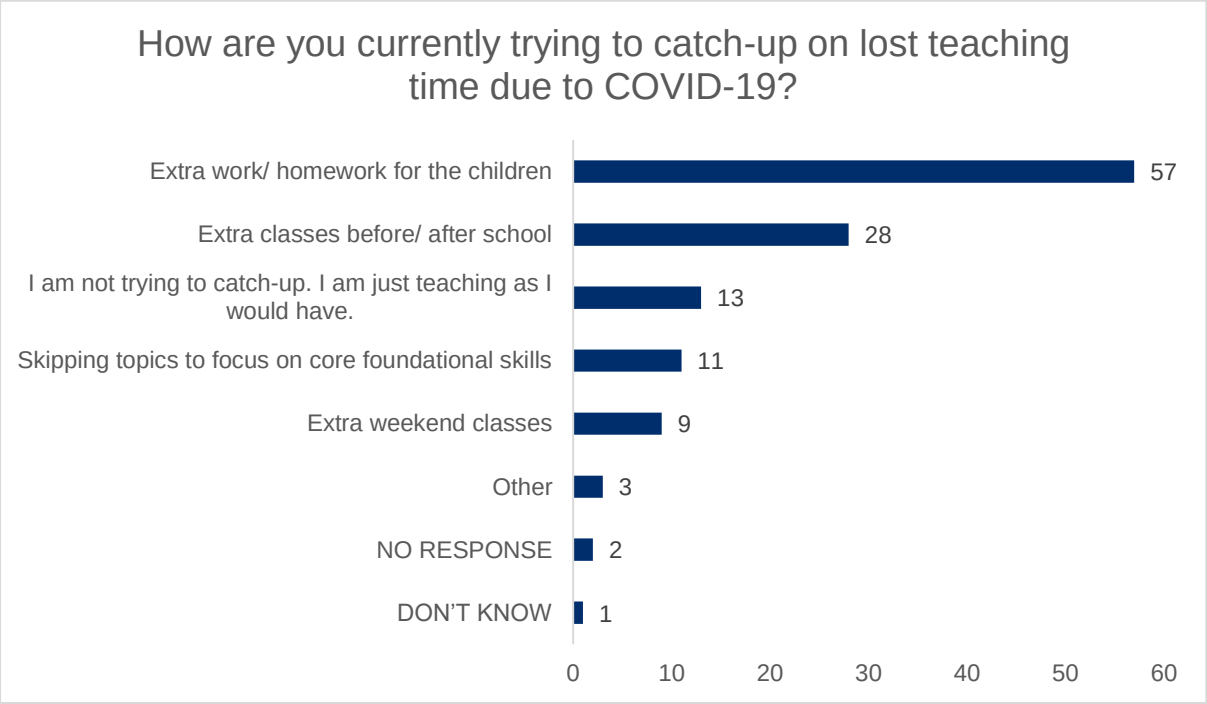
Figure 35: Caregivers' Challenges in Supporting Learning at Home



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. Notes: Responses from 1,925 caregivers from 191 schools. Multiple response options allowed for this question.

Responses from the teacher contextual questionnaires provide further evidence of the strategies employed by teachers to support learning after schooling resumed. Grade 7 teachers were asked, "How are you currently trying to catch up on lost teaching time due to COVID-19?" The most common response, provided by 57 percent of teachers, was for teachers to **give learners extra work/homework** (Figure 36). More than a third (37%) of teachers responded that they were catching up by providing extra lessons before or after school or on weekends.

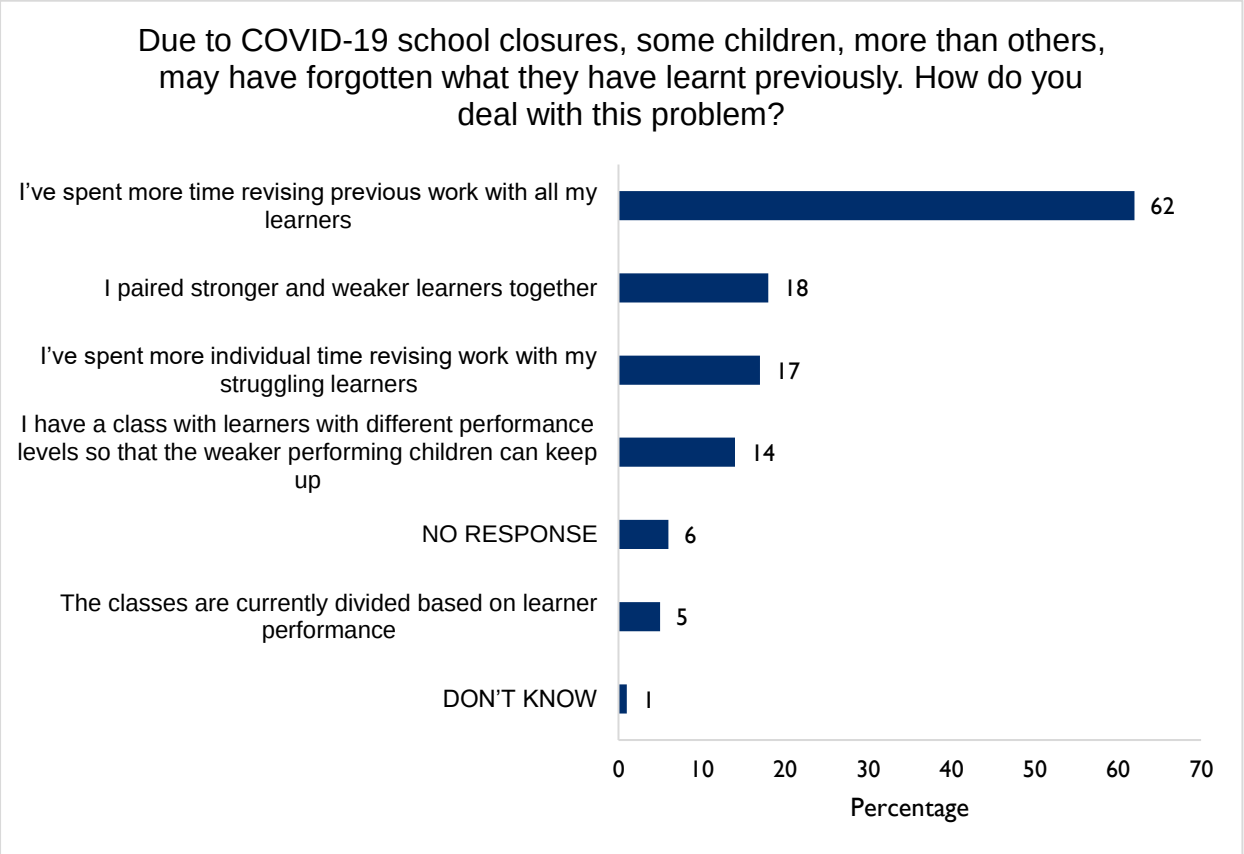
Figure 36: Grade 7 teachers' strategies to make up for lost learning time



Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses 309 Grade 7 teachers from 187 schools. Multiple response options allowed for this question.

School closures are disruptive for learning not only because of the direct "opportunity cost" of the time children spend out of school, but also because children forget what was previously learnt when they are not at school (Angrist et al., 2021; Ardington et al., 2021; Gustafsson and Nuga-Deliwe, 2020). When asked how they dealt with this, most Grade 7 teachers (62%) indicated that **they spent more time revising previous work with all their learners** (Figure 37). Interestingly, some teachers (18%) were pairing stronger and weaker learners together as a strategy for dealing with learners forgetting previously taught work, while a further 17 percent indicated that they had spent more time revising work with struggling learners specifically.

Figure 37: Grade 7 teacher strategies for dealing with children forgetting content



Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses 309 Grade 7 teachers from 187 schools. Multiple response options allowed for this question.

NON-CONTACT TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING LOCKDOWN AND AFTER SCHOOLING RESUMED (RQ 1.3 AND RQ 1.4)

Non-contact teaching and learning activities during school closures in 2020

In neither the GeoPoll caregiver survey nor the EGRS I contextual tools administered in Term 3 of 2021 are questions asked about non-contact learning and teaching during the hard lockdowns of 2020. We, however, draw directly from the *Preliminary Report on COVID-19 Research* (Bisgard et al., 2021) for this purpose. The report explores the extent of non-contact teaching and learning during the lockdown using self-reported responses from about 450 educators from 197 schools in two North West province districts (administered on telephone through GeoPoll in January 2021).

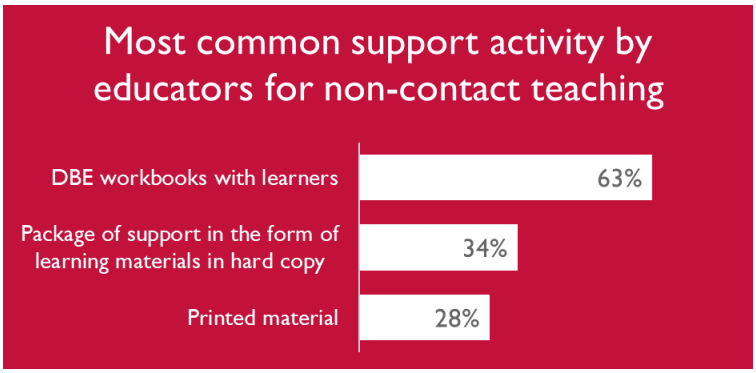
Non-contact teaching: Evidence from the January 2021 GeoPoll teacher survey

Learners' access to virtual or online teaching opportunities during lockdown was almost non-existent in the 197 North-West schools in that sample. In a school-level analysis of these responses, the use of online or virtual teaching during school closures was apparent in just 8 percent of the schools.

Furthermore, very few educators in the two North West districts encouraged learners to listen to radio or to watch educational programs on TV. Just 5 percent reported communicating to learners

about radio or TV classes. However, the results of the educator GeoPoll survey are indicative of how many foundation phase children in the two North West Provinces may have had access to the DBE workbooks, and potentially other hard copies of material to support learning at home. The provision of DBE workbooks or printed materials to learners was apparent in 90 percent of 194 schools. The most commonly support activity by educators for non-contact teaching during lockdown was to send home "DBE workbooks with learners" (63%), followed by providing a "package of support in the form of learning materials in hard copy" (34%), and providing "printed material" which caregivers collected and returned (28%).

Figure 38: Educators' Most Common Support for Non-Contact Teaching



Source: Bisgard et al., (2021) using data from the GeoPoll teacher survey administered in January 2021.

Non-contact learning: Evidence from the January 2021 GeoPoll teacher survey

From the same GeoPoll teacher survey, it was identified that about 86 percent of teacher respondents reported providing homework to learners during the school closures. It is not clear, however, if this was distinct from just sending home printed materials and DBE workbooks with learners at the start of the school closures. Yet, even if homework was given, the question remains as to whether learners did this work? Teachers were then asked "Do you think that, in general, learners did most of the work that teachers gave them to do during school closures?" About 54 percent indicated that work was given during school closures and it was done by learners (either in full or partially).

Figure 39: Teachers Reporting on learner work given during school closures and completed

Source: Bisgard et al., (2021) using data from the GeoPoll teacher survey administered in January 2021.

Non-contact teaching and learning activities after schooling resumed in 2021

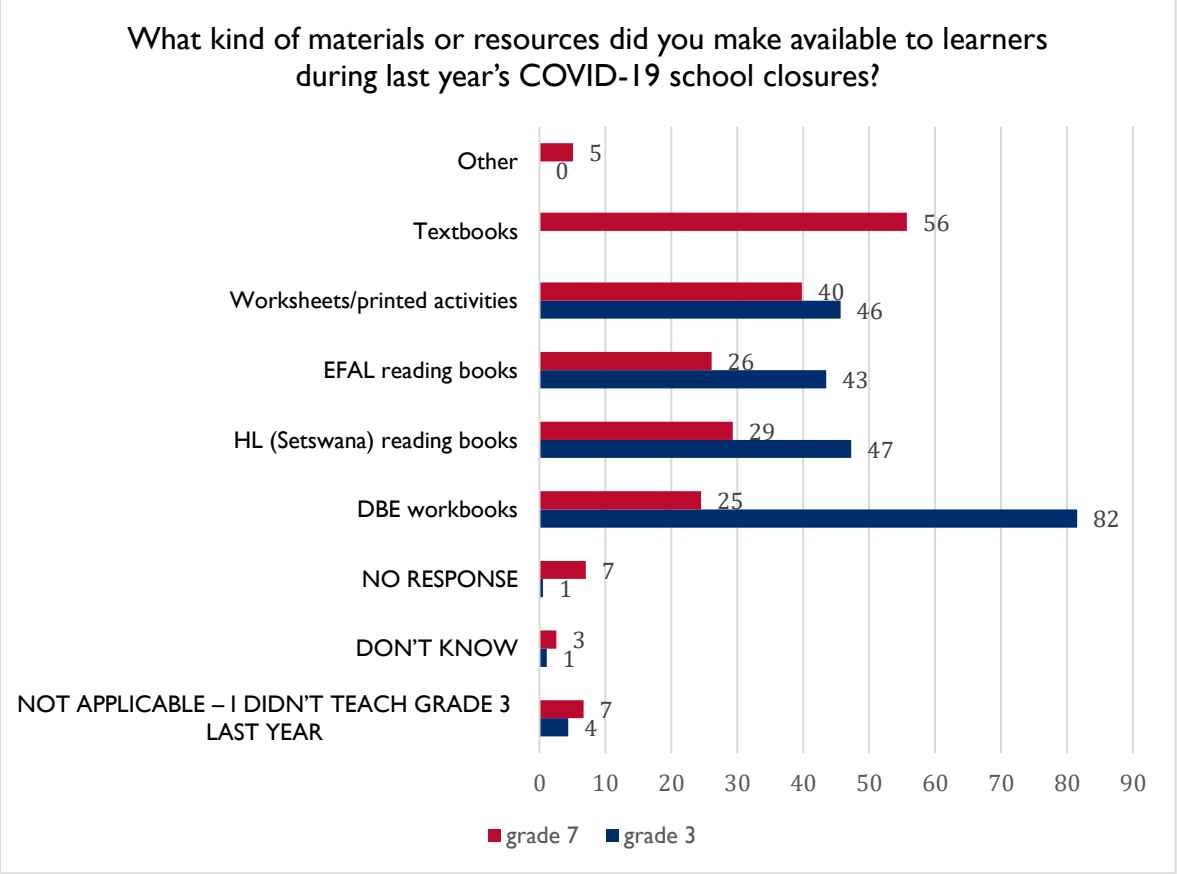
Similar questions about the amount of non-contact teaching and learning that occurred after schooling resumed were asked of teachers in the EGRS I surveys administered in Term 3 of 2021.

We make use of these responses to get some idea of the non-contact activities that schools used to support teaching and learning in the second year of the pandemic.

Non-contact teaching: Evidence from the EGRS I contextual tools

As had been the case during school closures in 2020, the most common support activity for non-contact teaching during 2021 among Foundation Phase teachers was to send home DBE workbooks with learners (Figure 40). By contrast, the most common type of materials used to support learning at home among Grade 7 teachers were textbooks, which were used by about 56 percent of the Grade 7 teacher sample. Significant proportions of both Grade 3 (40%) and Grade 7 (46%) teachers indicated making use of worksheets or printed materials to support learning at home. Likewise, Setswana and English First Additional Language (EFAL) reading books were also utilized by both Grade 3 and Grade 7 teachers. Only about 25 percent of Grade 7 teachers indicated sending DBE workbooks home with learners.

Figure 40: Types of Materials Used to Support Learning at Home



Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 184 Grade 3 teachers in 142 schools and 314 Grade 7 teachers from 188 schools. Multiple response options allowed for this question.

Non-contact learning

Compared to non-contact learning during school closures in 2020, responses from the 2021 teacher questionnaires suggest that roughly the same proportion of learners did the work given to them to complete at home (either partially or in full): On average, **59** percent **of Grade 3 and 51** percent

of Grade 7 teachers indicated that they gave learners work to complete at home and that it was done by learners.

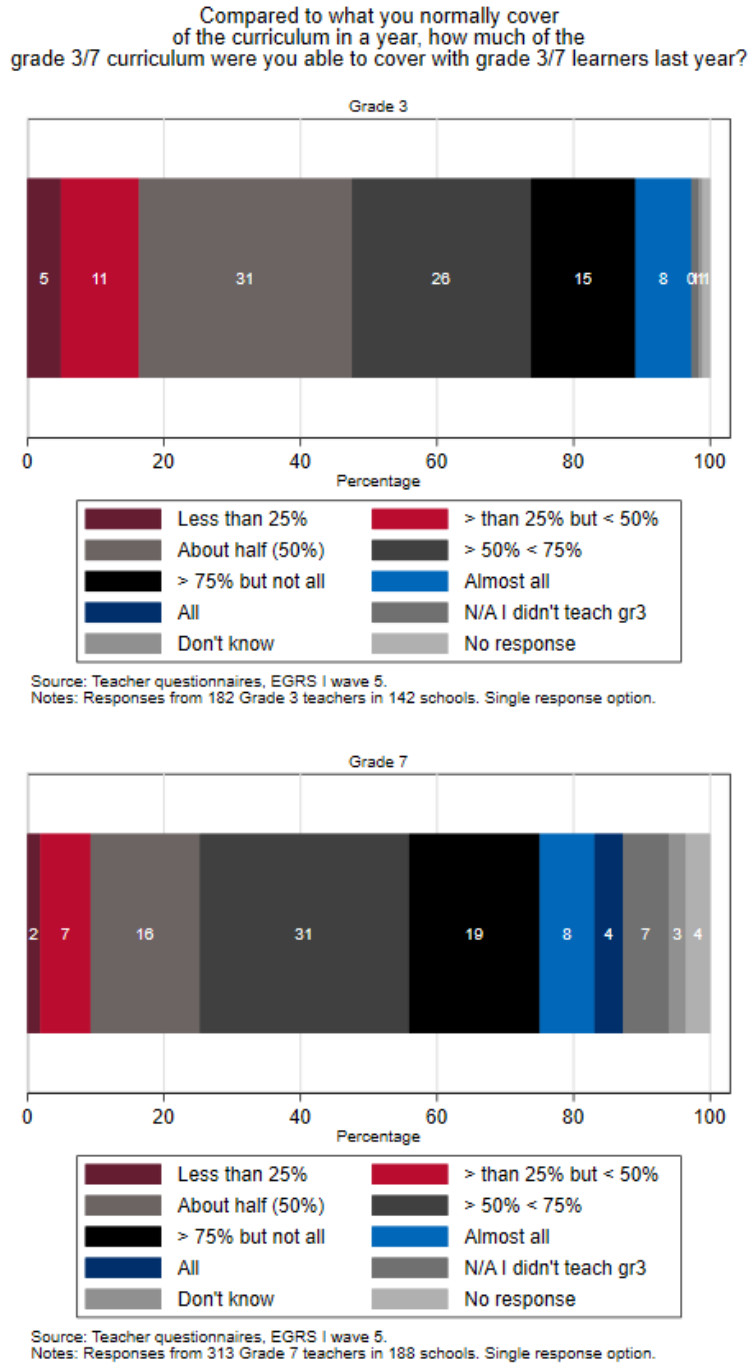
Figure 41: How much work was sent home and completed by learners after schooling resumed

Source: Teacher contextual questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 184 Grade 3 teacher in 142 schools.

TO WHAT EXTENT DID TEACHERS COVER THE STANDARD AND TRIMMED EGR CURRICULUM IN THE 2020 ACADEMIC YEAR, AND HOW DOES THIS COMPARE TO BUSINESS AS USUAL? (RQ 1.6)

While it is not possible to measure how much of the trimmed curriculum teachers covered in 2020, one can get an idea of how much of the curriculum was covered through teachers' responses to a question on how much of the curriculum they had managed to cover in 2020. Responses are plotted in Figure 42. In the context of losing more than half of the contact teaching time in 2020, about 47 percent of Grade 3 teachers and 25 percent of Grade 7 teachers indicated they were able to only cover 50 percent or less of the regular curriculum in 2020. But just 12 percent and 8 percent of Grade 7 and 3 teachers respectively said they had managed to cover 'almost all' or 'all of the curriculum' as seen in Figure 42.

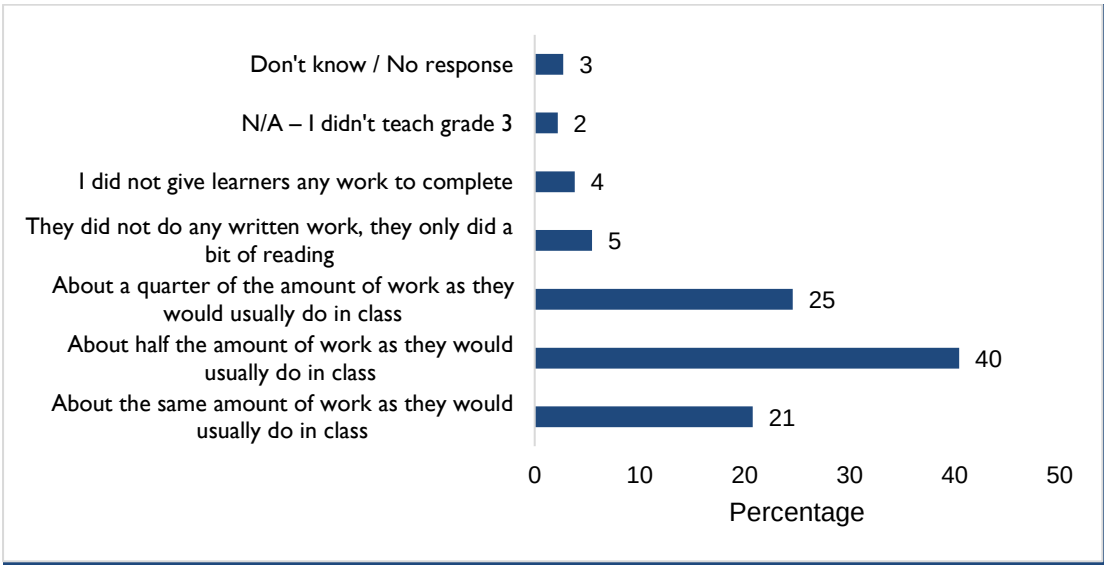
Figure 42: Proportion of the normal curriculum covered in 2020



Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 182 Grade 3 teachers in 142 schools and 313 Grade 7 teachers in 188 schools. Single response option.

Grade 3 teachers were also asked to compare the amount of work they gave learners to complete at home with the amount of work they would normally do in class. The most common response was that **learners were given only about half as much work as they would normally do in class**, with 40 percent of Grade 3 teachers providing this response (Figure 43). Worryingly, a further 25 percent of teachers indicated that they only sent about a quarter as much work as they would normally do in class home with learners.

Figure 43: Grade 3 Teachers' perceptions of amount of homework given



Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 182 Grade 3 teachers in 173 schools. Single response options.

WHAT EFFECT HAS THE COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS HAD ON CHILDREN'S LEARNING? (RQ 1.7)

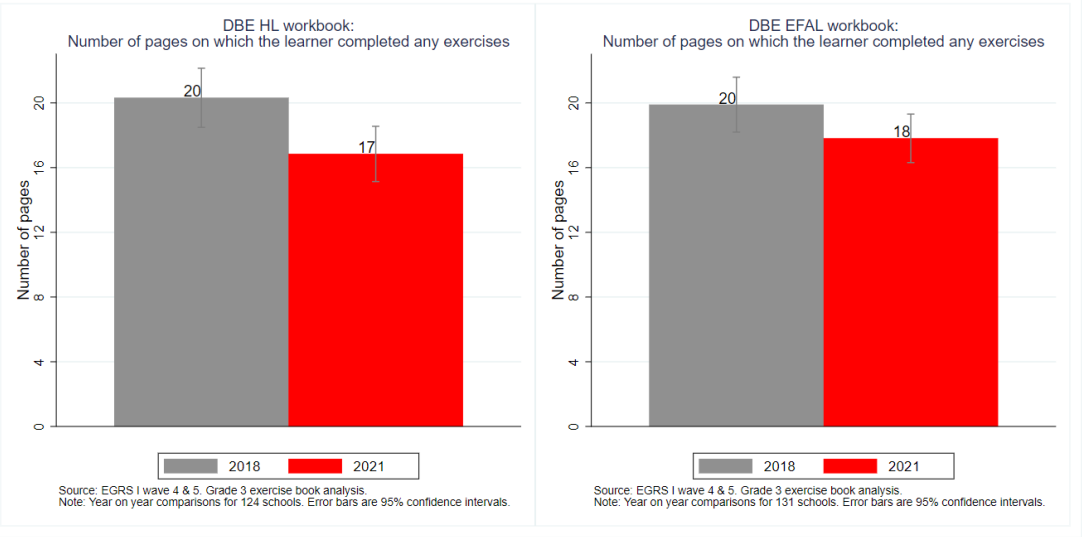
It is clear from the above analysis that schooling has been significantly disrupted. In this section, we use objective observations of work done in DBE workbooks in 2021 and 2018 in the same schools to identify to what extent opportunity to learn has been affected. We then explore teacher perceptions of how early Grade reading has been impacted and caregiver perceptions of how they think their children have been impacted during the pandemic.

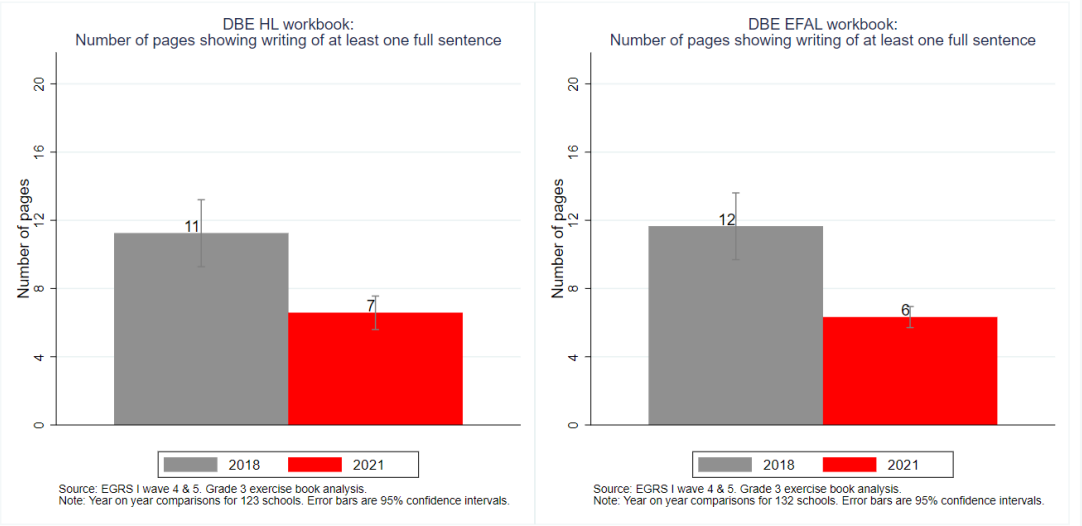
Workbook coverage

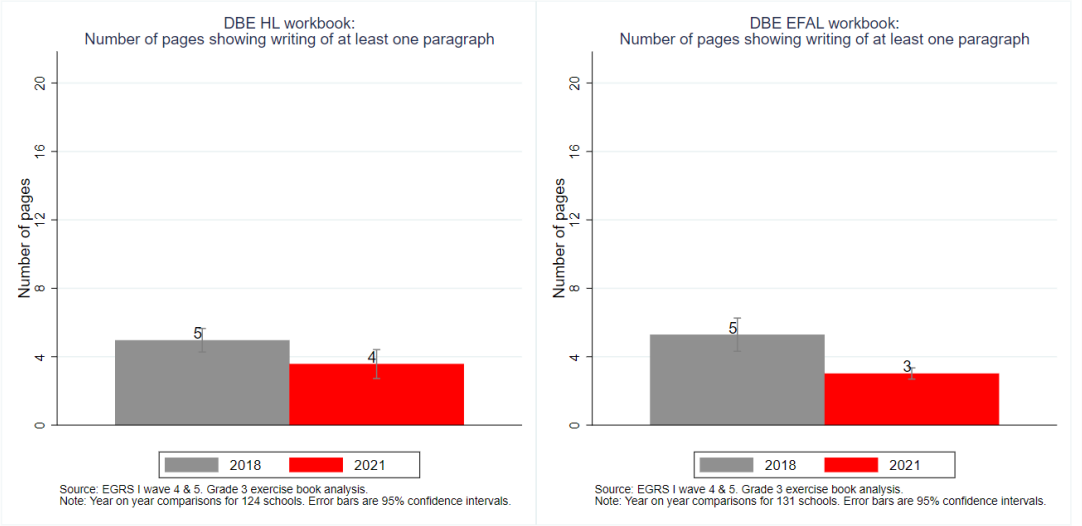
In Wave 4 of EGRS I, conducted in 2018, Grade 3 teachers were asked to select the most proficient learner from among Grade 3 learners assessed in reading. This learner's DBE workbooks in both home language (HL) and English first additional language (EFAL) in Term 3 were then analyzed by the fieldworker to identify since the start of the third term:

- The overall number of pages on which the learner completed any exercises
- The number of pages involving exercises comprising the writing of at least one full sentence.
- The number of pages involving exercises comprising the writing of at least one paragraph.

Figure 44: Comparing the best Grade 3 learner's DBE workbook coverage in 2018 and 2021







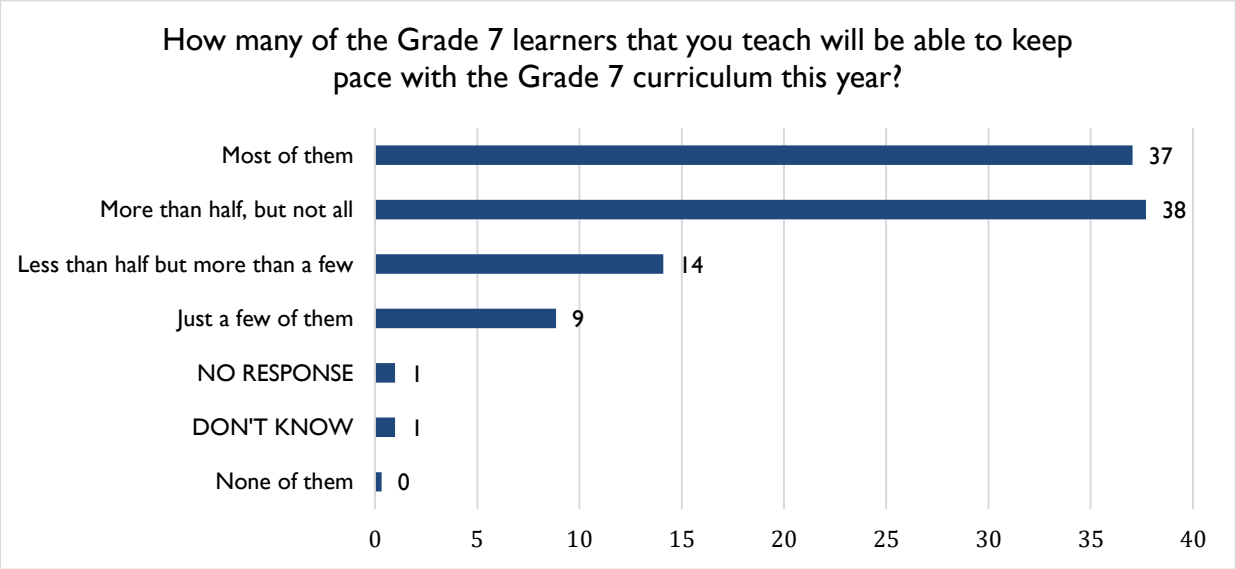
In Term 3 of 2021, the same exercise was repeated but Grade 3 workbooks were assessed for the teacher's two most proficient learners. In the analysis that follows, we take the best workbook outcomes across the two workbooks assessed in 2021 and compare this to the best Grade 3 learner's workbook assessed in 2018 in the same schools. Fortunately, the average number of days that had passed since the start of the term, and when workbooks were assessed, was very similar in 2018 and 2021. This supports the comparison. Year-on-year comparable outcomes of pages of DBE workbook coverage are identified for between 122 and 132 EGRS I schools in Figure 44.

Since the start of term 3, the average number of pages of coverage in DBE workbooks had declined from 20 to 17 in home language, and from 20 to 18 in EFAL (although these differences are not statistically significantly different). There was evidence of significant difference in writing of at least one full sentence from 11 to 7 pages in home language, and a halving of coverage from 12 to 6 pages in EFAL workbooks. Pages of paragraph writing in EFAL workbooks significantly declined from 5 pages in 2018 to 3 pages in 2021.

Teacher perceptions of how learning has been affected

Teachers were asked how their learners were progressing, compared to other years. Specifically, Grade 7 teachers were asked, "How many of the Grade 7 learners that you teach will be able to keep pace with the Grade 7 curriculum this year?" **Together, 75** percent **of teachers indicated that "more than half, but not all", or "most" Grade 7 learners that they currently teach would be able to keep pace with the curriculum** (Figure 45).

Figure 45: Grade 7 Teachers' perceptions of learners who could keep pace with the curriculum

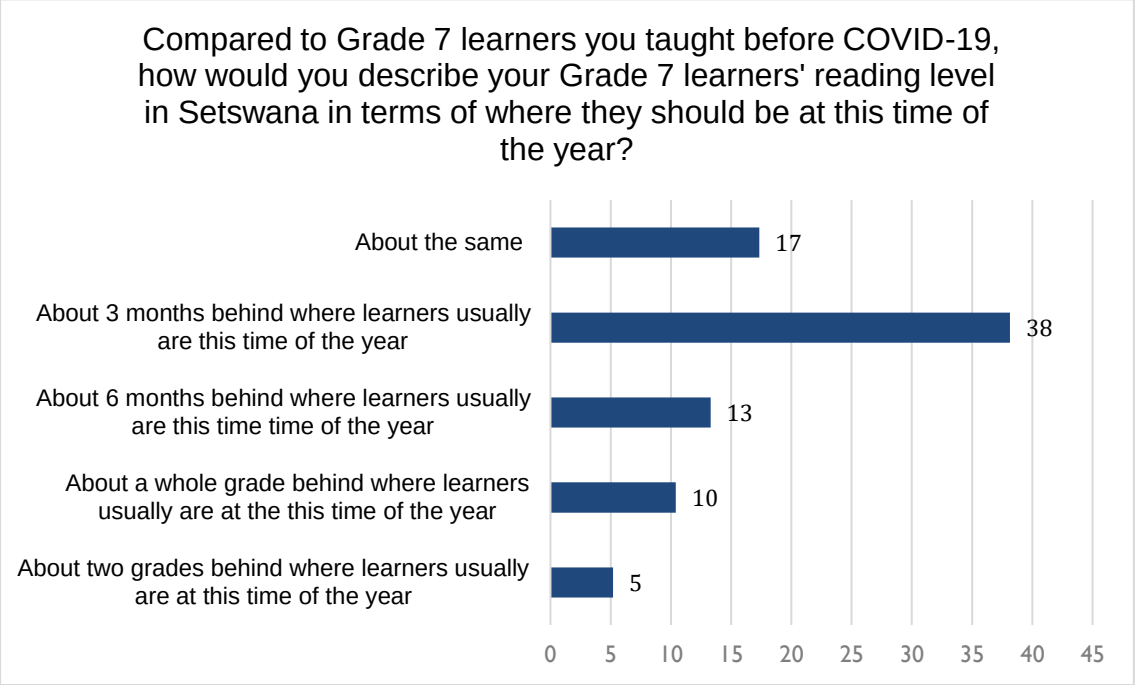


Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 305 Grade 7 teachers in 187 schools. Single response option.

Grade 7 teachers were also asked to compare their current Grade 7 learners' reading levels (in Setswana) with those of learners they taught before COVID-19. Unfortunately, there were high levels of non-response to this question, with only an available sample of 173 Grade 7 teachers from 134 schools responding. The most common response (38%) was for teachers to indicate that **their Grade 7 learners were about three months behind where they usually are in Term 3**

(Figure 46). A worrying 28 percent of teachers indicated that their learners were six months or more behind where they should be during Term 3 of Grade 7, in terms of Setswana reading.

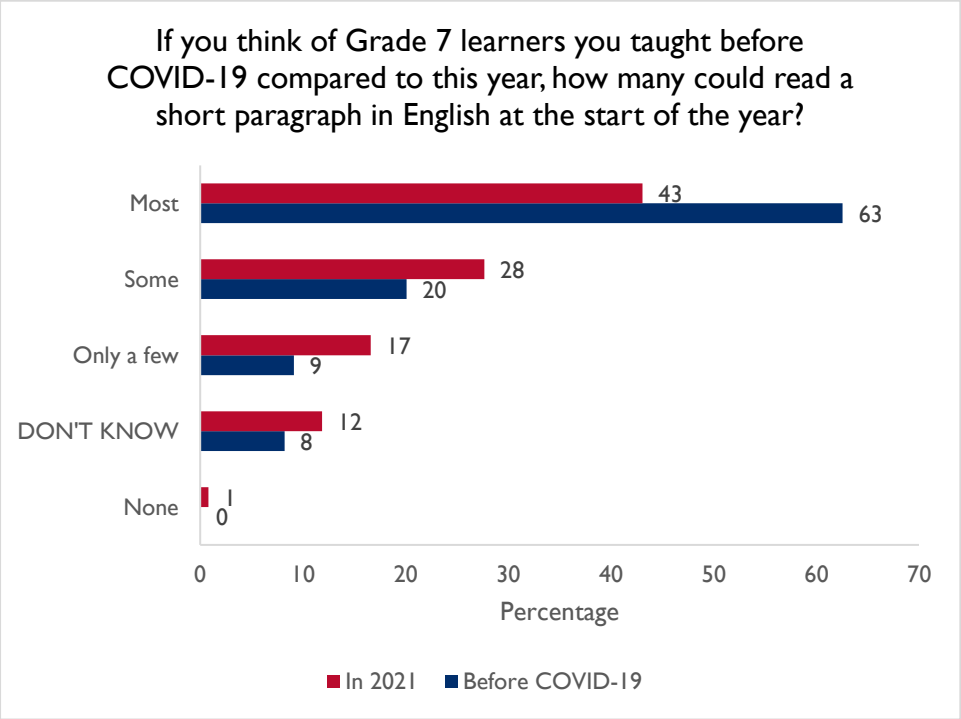
Figure 46: Grade 7 Teachers' perceptions of learners' performance in Setswana reading



Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 173 Grade 7 teachers in 136 schools. Single response option.

Figure 47 provides a comparison of teachers' perceptions of Grade 7 learners' reading performance in English, in 2021 versus before the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, Grade 7 teachers were asked what proportion of learners could read a short paragraph in English at the start of the year. **Teachers had clearly noticed a difference in the English reading abilities of their Grade 7 learners in 2021, with 43** percent **indicating that "most" learners could read a short paragraph in English at the start of the year – compared with 63** percent **of learners before COVID-19.**

Figure 47: Grade 7 Teachers' perceptions of learner's English reading performance



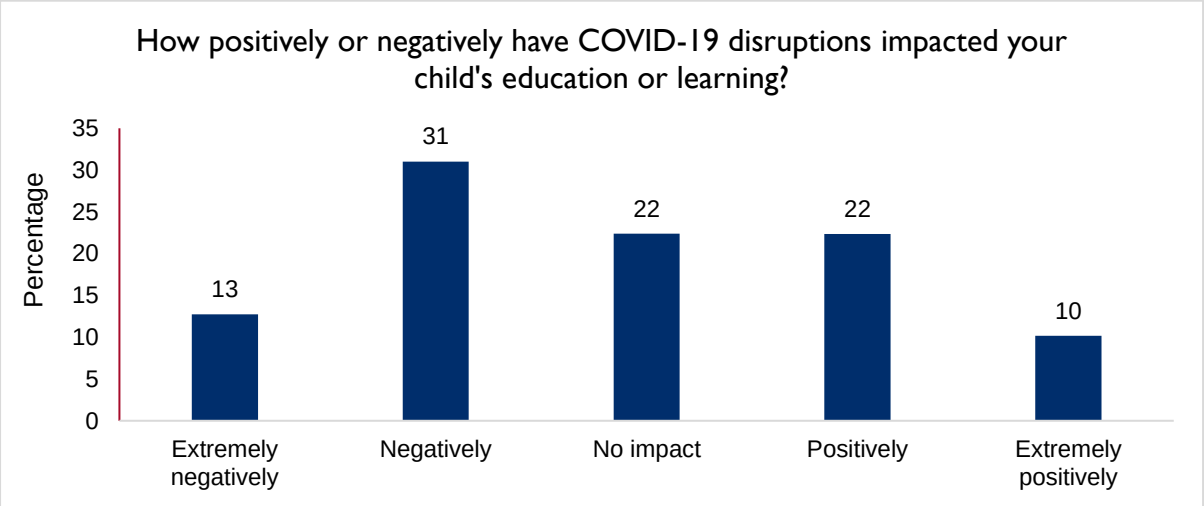
Source: Teacher questionnaires, EGRS I Wave 5. Notes: Responses from 253 Grade 7 teachers in 173 schools. Single response option.

Caregiver perceptions of COVID-19 impacts on their children's education

There are various questions in the caregiver GeoPoll survey to ascertain caregiver's perceptions of how their children's academic performance has been impacted by COVID-19.

In terms of the overall impact that COVID-19 related school closures had on children's education, **44** percent **of 1,925 caregivers from 191 schools indicated that their children's education had been impacted negatively** or **very negatively** (Figure 48). **But not all caregivers believe children were negatively impacted.** Interestingly, **a further third of caregivers indicated that COVID-19 had had a "positive" or "extremely positive" impact on their children's education** (Figure 48). This is an interesting finding worth further investigation, and this does not reflect a reporting error overall.

Figure 48: Caregiver views on the Impact of COVID-19 on education



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. Notes: Single response question. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

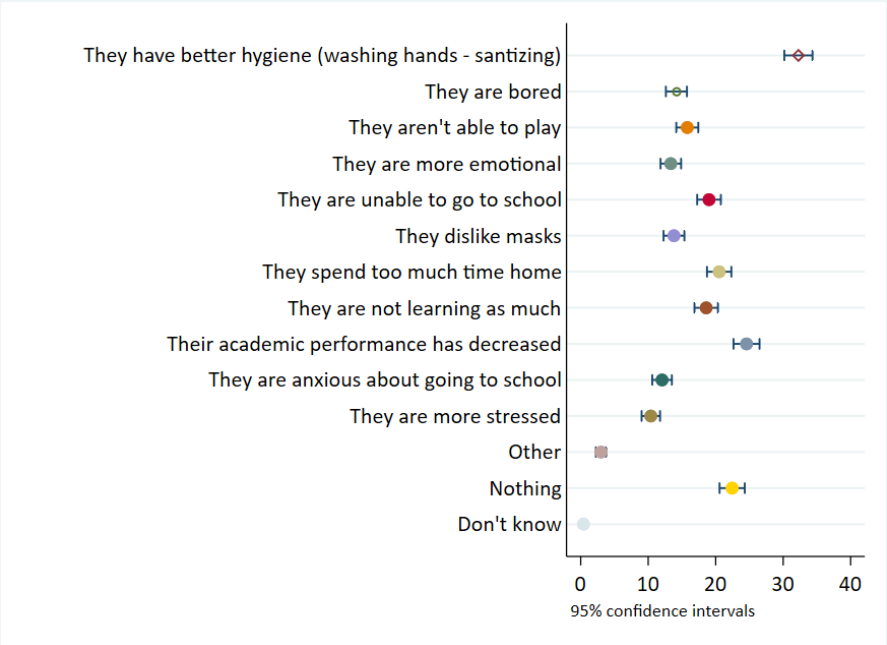
Caregivers were asked the following questions: "Could you tell me how COVID-19 has impacted on your child(ren)? Have you noticed any changes in how your children are behaving compared to before?" This multiple response question is complex to answer, yet interesting responses emerge (see Figure 49). Of the caregiver sample, 19 percent indicated that children were not learning as much, and a quarter indicated that their children's academic performance had decreased. Not all caregivers, however, perceive negative impacts with 22 percent saying that nothing had changed in their children's behavior. The most significant change observed by caregivers, even more so than perceived changes in learning, is that hygiene practices have improved.

We find that in general the caregivers of learners who indicate their children's education has been positively or extremely positively impacted by COVID-19 are far more positive in their choice of responses to the question "Could you tell me how COVID-19 has impacted on your child(ren)? Have you noticed any changes in how your children are behaving compared to before?" Compared with caregivers that indicate children's education or learning has been disrupted by COVID-19, caregivers that say children are positively impacted are far *less* likely to report that their children are bored, aren't able to play, that they are emotional, unable to go to school, dislike masks, are not learning as much, are stressed or are anxious about going to school (see Figure 51).

An expressed concern by caregivers, even more so than reporting on limited learning in schools, is their limited ability to help their children with their work. When asked "In your opinion, in what ways has COVID-19 affected your child(ren)'s learning/education?", the most common response by 26 percent of 1,925 caregivers was that "I cannot assist with homework, so they cannot understand the work" (see Figure 50). This is concerning and is symptom of an education system that is increasingly dependent on households and families to fill gaps in learning due to lost learning time, perpetuated through rotational attendance systems.

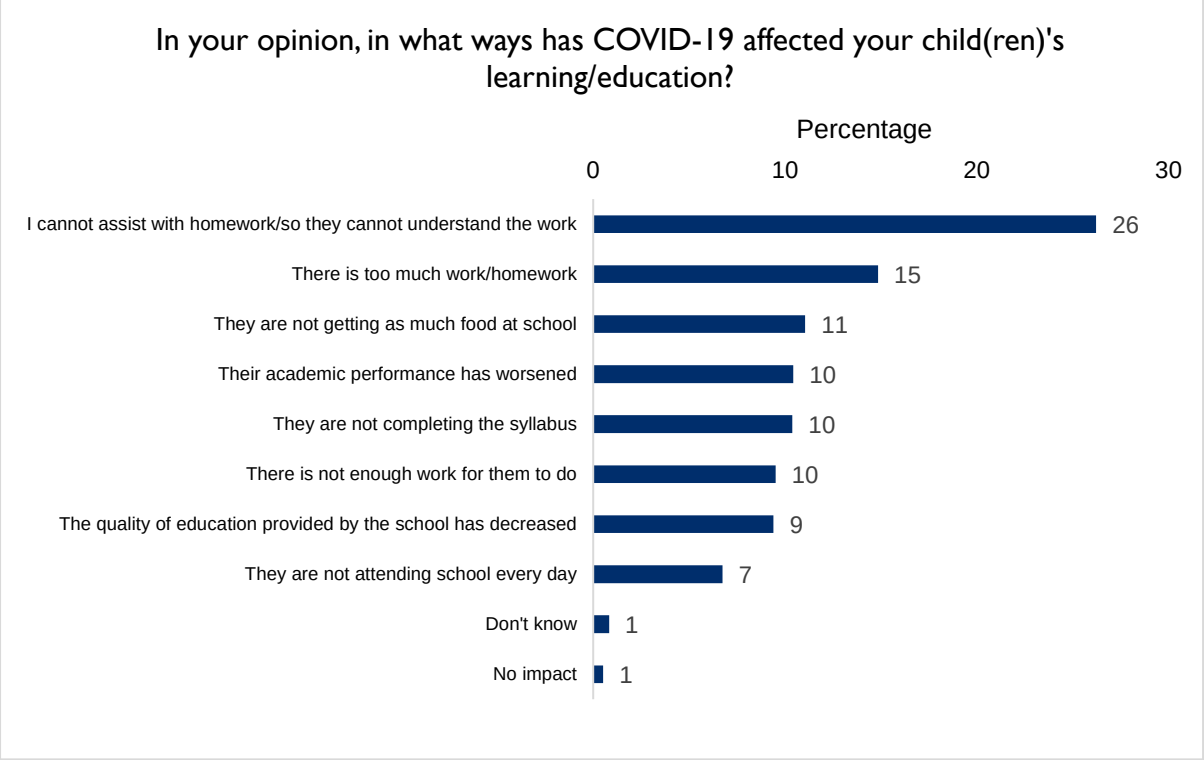
A further insight from Figure 50 is that in responding to the same question about how COVID-19 has affected children, 11 percent of 1,925 caregivers said that "they are not getting as much food at school", which leads us into a discussion of school feeding impacts.

Figure 49: Caregiver views on how COVID-19 impacted their child



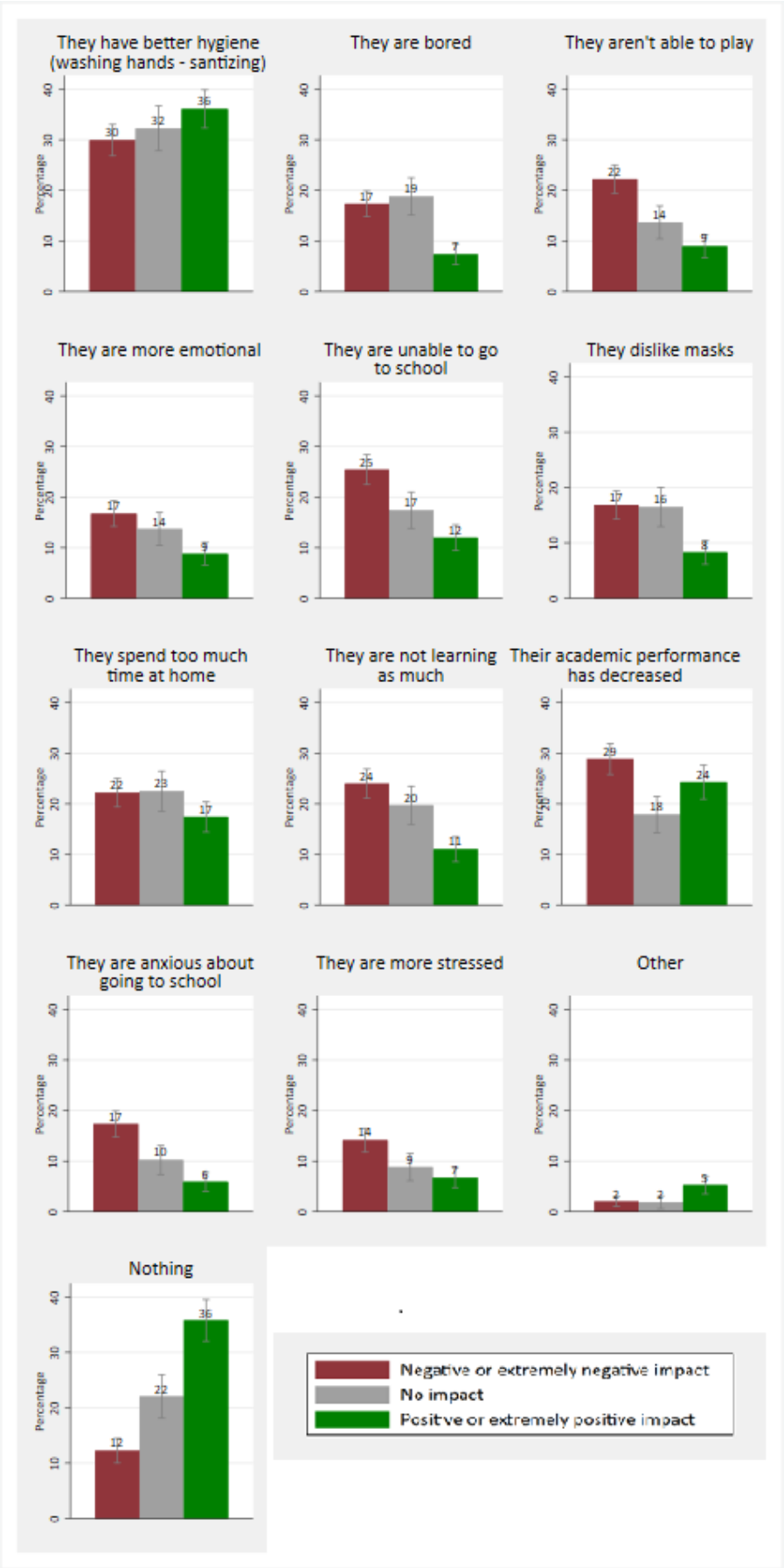
Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey (October 2021). Notes: Multiple response question. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Figure 50: Caregiver's view of the Impact of COVID-19 on education



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey (October 2021). Notes: 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools. Multiple response options allowed for this question.

Figure 51: Detailed Caregiver response to impact of COVID-19 on learners



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey (October 2021). Responses to the question "Could you tell me how COVID-19 has impacted on your child(ren)? Have you noticed any changes in how your children are behaving compared to before?", by how they feel their education has been impacted. Notes: 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

School feeding

Across waves 4 and 5 of EGRS I, a school functionality tool was administered with identical questions on school feeding. In a pandemic context where rotational schedules, reduced attendance and increased safety procedures around school feeding may be required, it is instructive to compare how the National School Nutrition Program has been affected. We compare fieldworker reports for the same 182 schools from 2018 to 2021. The questions used for this analysis, are similar across the 2018 and 2021 surveys as viewed.

Government provides a meal to learners in all no-fee schools in the form of one lunch meal per day. All the 182 schools provide food to learners in Term 3 of 2018 and 2021 and importantly the provision of lunch has increased from 76 percent in 2018 to 86 percent in 2021.

However, it appears from the data that there has been a decline in the extent of private nutritional programming at schools with mid-morning snacks, and breakfasts less likely to be provided in 2021 compared to 2019 as seen in Table 27. This includes a fivefold decline in the likelihood that schools provide breakfast, and a 13-fold decline in the likelihood that they provide a mid-morning snack. This is astonishing and worth further interrogation to determine if this is true and not just reflecting data errors.

Reports on the food groups provided in a week, indicate that schools are significantly less likely to provide fruits (100% down to 85%), and slightly less likely to provide vegetables (100% down to 95%) to learners in 2021 compared to in 2018. One possibility for this decline is that the 2021 questionnaire required the fieldworker to see the menu of the school, rather than just ask about the menu in 2021.

Table 27: Food received at school and which meals are provided to learners

	Wave 4 - 2018		Wave 5 - 2021	
	%	se	%	se
Government provisioning				
The learners receive food at the school	100		100	
Provide lunch	77	3	85	3
Most likely private provisioning				
Provide breakfast	99	0.5	19	3
Provide mid-morning snack	78	3	6	2
N (same schools across waves)	182		182	

Source: School Functionality Tool, EGRS I, Waves 4 and 5.

Table 28: Food groups provided in a week

	Wave 4 - 2018		Wave 5 - 2021	
	%	se	%	se
Carbohydrates	100	0	99	0.8
Fruits	100	0	85	2.7
Vegetables	99	0.5	94	1.7
Proteins	93	2	93	1.9
N (same schools across waves)	182		182	

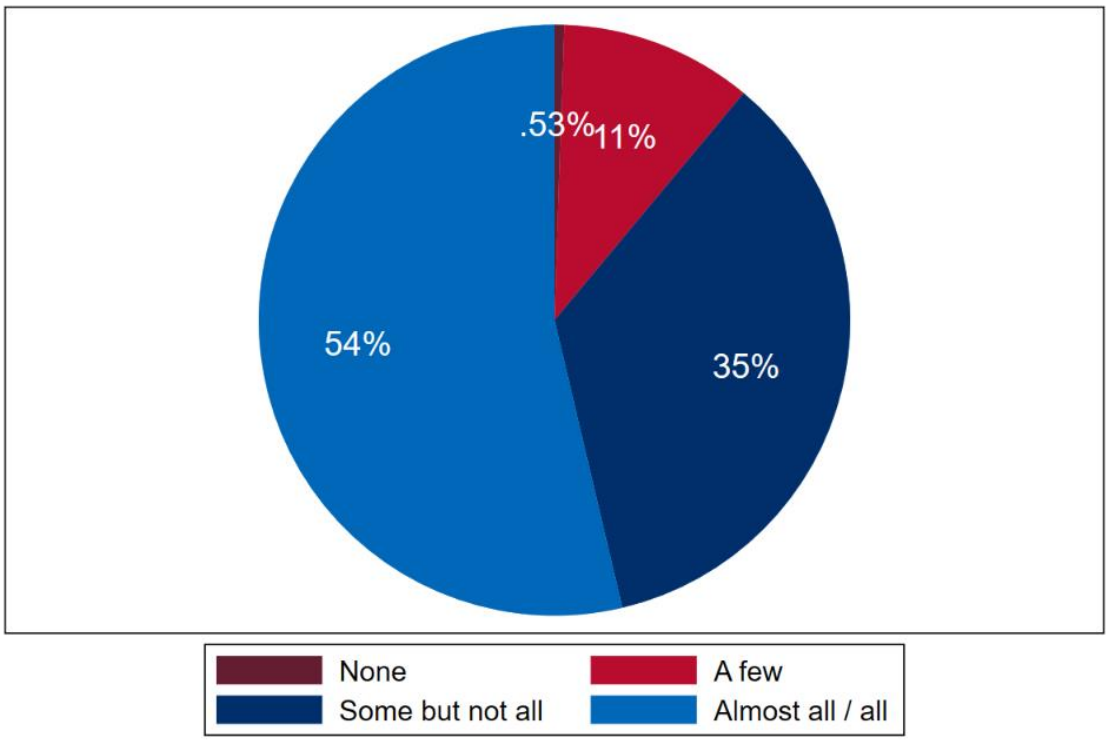
Source: School functionality tool, EGRS I Waves 4 and 5.

Following COVID-19 protocols: Social Distancing, mask-wearing and hand-washing

Mask wearing

Mask wearing in EGRS I schools remained commonplace in Term 3 of 2021. Fieldworker observations from 190 schools indicate that in 54 percent of these schools, masks were worn correctly by almost all or all learners, while in a further 35 percent masks were worn correctly by some but not all learners. High levels of non-compliance with mask wearing were observed in the remaining 12 percent of 190 schools.

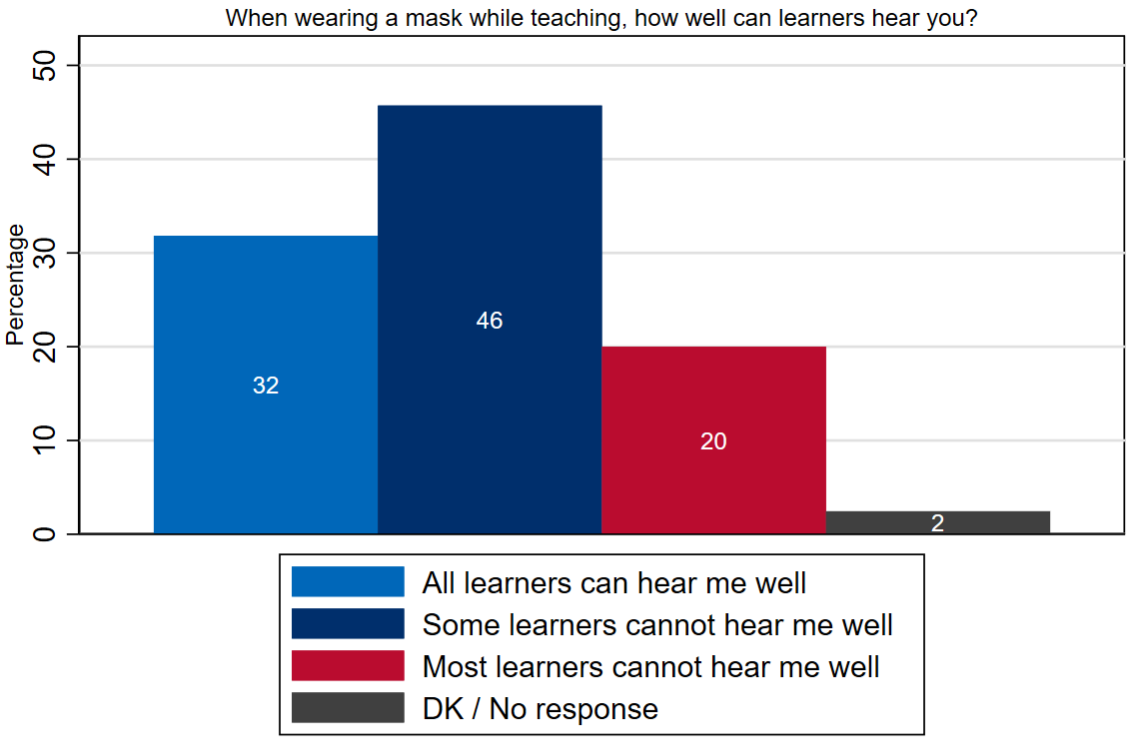
Figure 52: Percentage of learners wearing masks that cover mouth and nose



Source: School functionality questionnaire, EGRS I wave 5.
Notes: 190 fieldworker observations from 190 schools.

Despite the efficacy of mask-wearing in reducing the transmission of infection, an important insight from the teacher contextual tools, is that mask-wearing by teachers in the classroom is constraining learner's ability to hear what is being taught. Altogether 245 Grade 3 teachers from 173 schools responded to the question "When wearing a mask while teaching, how well can learners hear you?" **As many as one in five (20%) Grade 3 teachers said most learners cannot hear me well when wearing a mask while teaching.** A further 46 percent said "some learners can hear me well". Only around a third of Grade teachers said that "all learners can hear me well".

Figure 53: Impact of teacher mask-wearing on learners

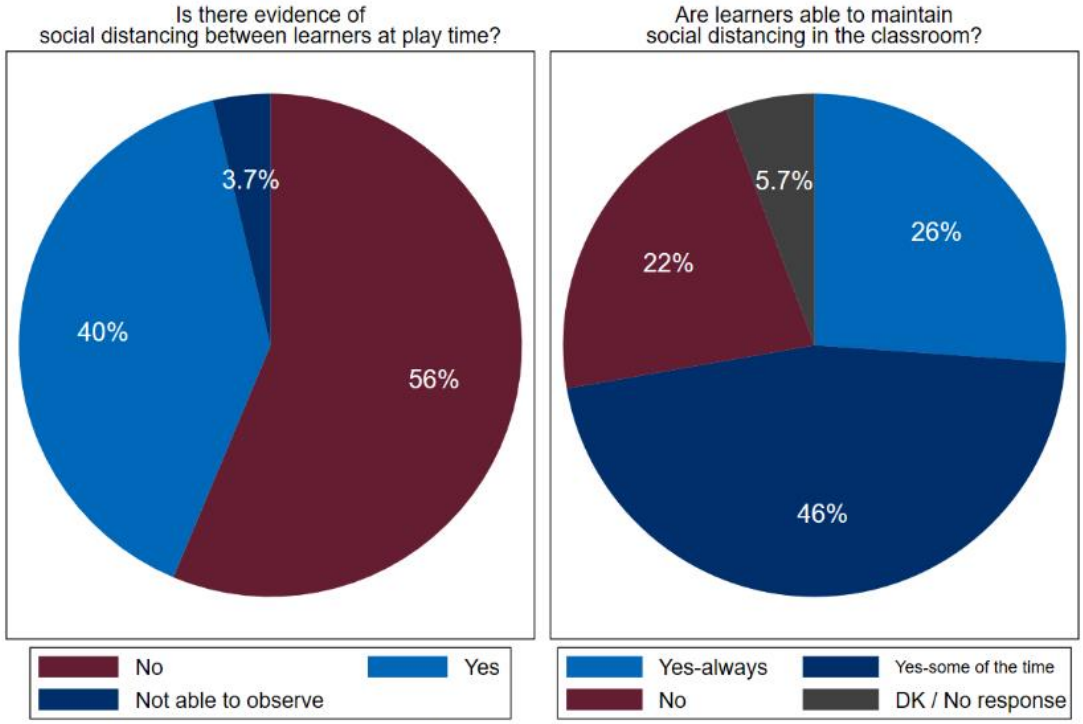


Source: Grade 3 teacher questionnaire, EGRS I wave 5
Notes: 245 grade 3 teachers from 173 schools.

Social distancing

In the main, social distancing is being maintained in classrooms. Grade 3 teachers were asked the following question: "Are learners able to maintain social distancing in the classroom?" Among the 245 Grade 3 teachers from 173 schools, the majority (72%) say that learners "always" or "some of the time maintain" social distancing in the classroom while 22 percent responded "No". Social distancing at play time, however, is more problematic in schools. In fieldworker reports from 190 schools, just 40 percent indicated that children were able to maintain social distancing during playtime.

Figure 54: Social distancing in the classroom and at playtime

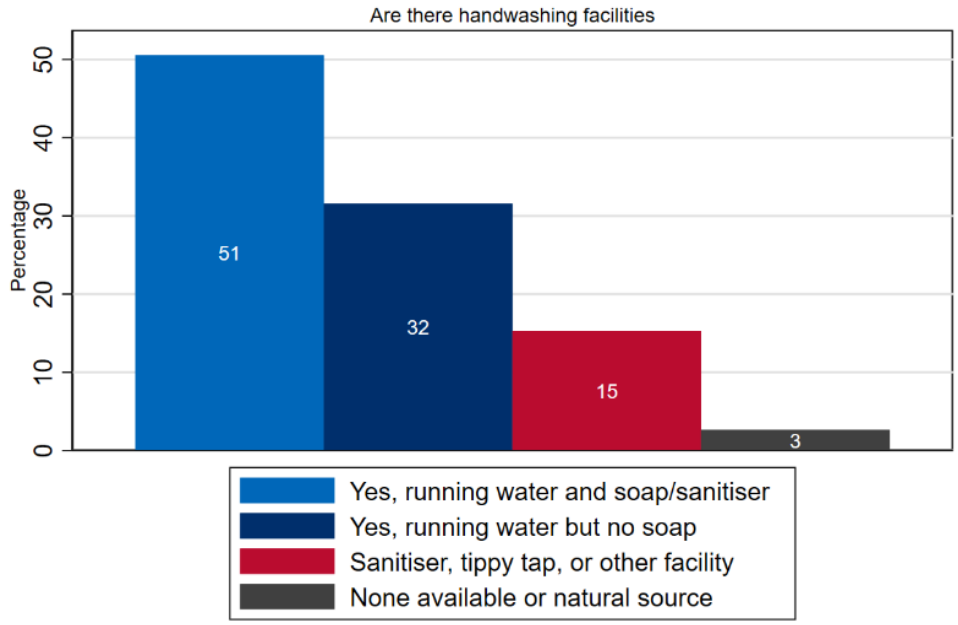


Hand-washing and Sanitization

For the most part, the North West schools in the EGRS sample have created environments for adherence to hand-washing/sanitization protocols. Fieldworker observations in 190 schools suggest that in 97 percent of the schools there is evidence of hand-washing facilities.

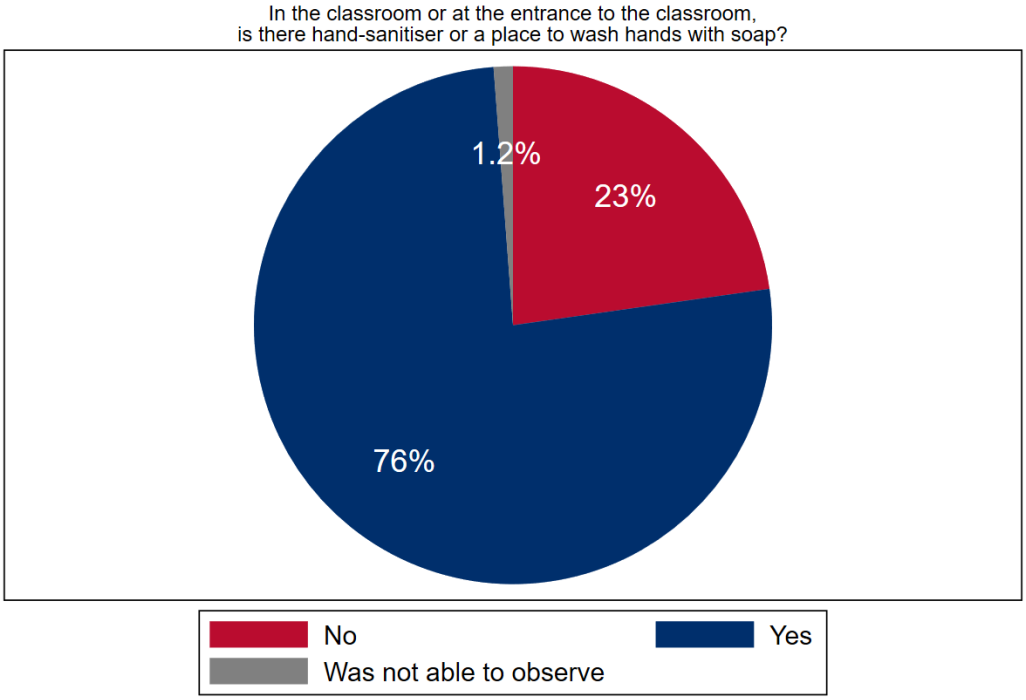
As observed across 167 Grade 3 classrooms from 167 schools, hand-washing or sanitizing facilities are available in or near the entrance of the classroom in just over three quarters (76%) of the schools.

Figure 55: Handwashing Facilities



Source: School functionality questionnaire, EGRS I wave 5
Notes: Fieldworker observations for 190 schools.

Figure 56: Hand-sanitizer or place to wash hands in or near classroom entrance



Source: Grade 3 classroom observation, EGRS I wave 5. Notes: 167 observations from 167 schools

APPENDIX 3: COVID-19 Impact on Psychosocial Well-being

This section responds to the research question 2:

2. Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the psychosocial wellbeing of teachers, caregivers and learners to such an extent that their ability to teach/learn or support learners has changed?

WHAT ABOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WORRIES TEACHERS, CAREGIVERS AND LEARNERS MOST? (RQ2.1)

Caregivers

Caregiver well-being is important to consider, particularly in relation to learner well-being, as a strong relationship has been found between caregiver involvement in their child/ren's education and academic performance (Taylor, 2020). Not only this, but from a modelling of mortality and fertility data of 21 countries, Hillis et al., (2021) estimate that globally, from March 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, 1,134,000 children experienced the death of primary caregivers, and 1,562,000 children experienced the death of at least one primary or secondary caregiver. From what has been discussed in the literature review section on the importance of caregivers on a child's academic outcomes and well-being, this has huge implications on the learning abilities and outcomes, as well as the well-being, of children.

Figure 57: What worries caregivers the most about COVID-19

42%

Were worried about getting sick (themselves and/or others)

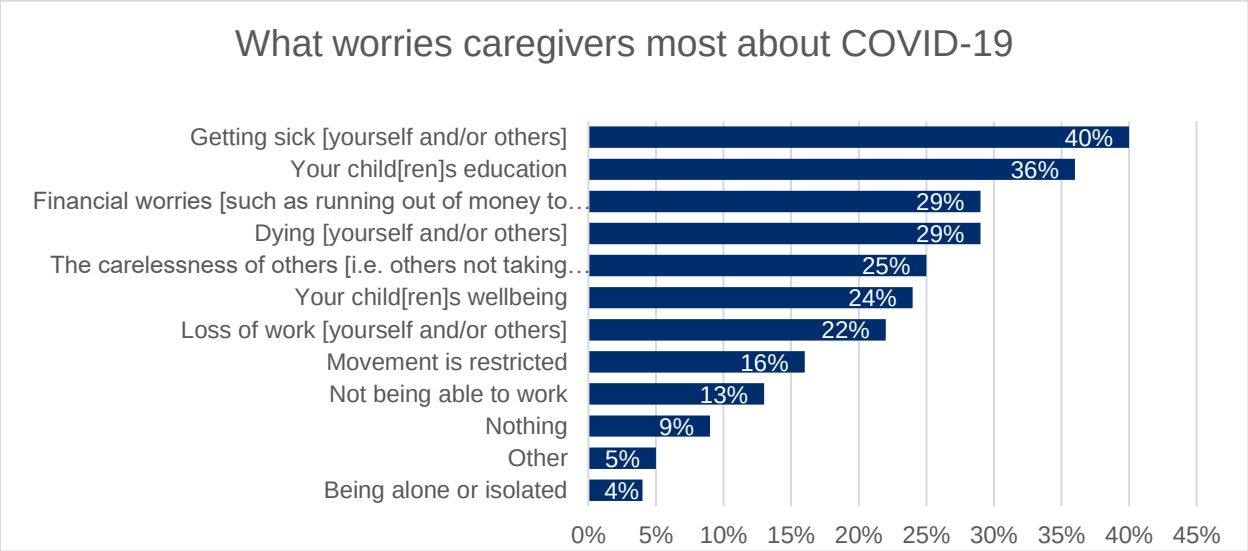
36%

Were worried about their children's education

Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Respondents worries in relation to COVID-19 were focused on them or others getting sick (40%), followed by being worried about their children's education. In fact, the concern over their children's education superseded other concerns such as financial worries (29%), dying (29%), their children's well-being (24%), or loss of work (22%). Caregivers were very concerned about the impact COVID-19 was having on their children's education.

Figure 58: What most concerns caregivers about COVID-19

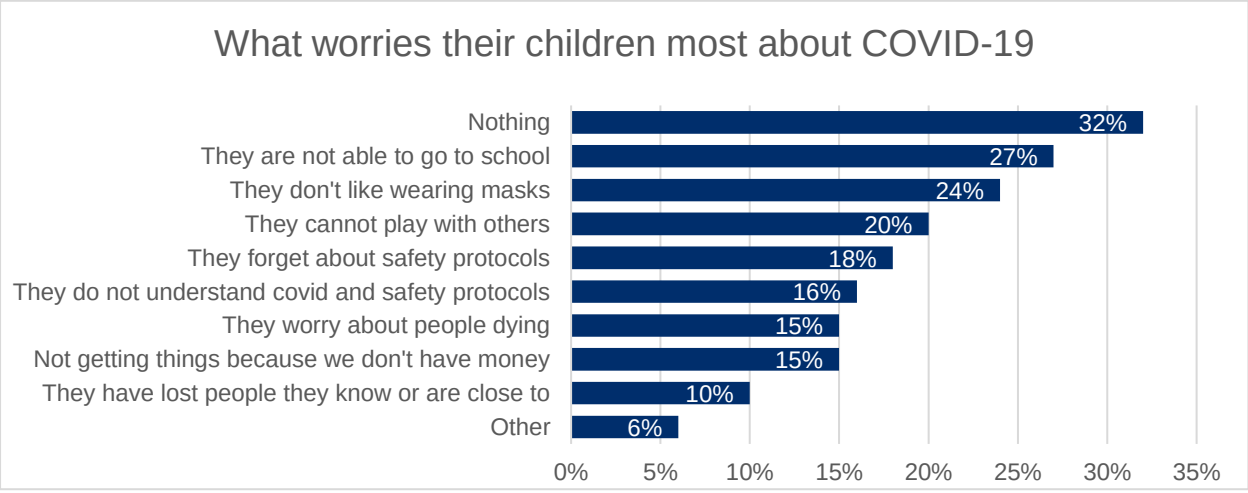


Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

What worries their children the most about COVID-19?

According to 32 percent of caregivers, their children are not worried about anything in relation to COVID-19. This is very concerning considering the research showing that children are both concerned about and impacted by COVID-19 in a variety of ways (Gittings et al., 2021; Ncube & Modise, 2020; Jansen, 2020, Parker et al., 2020). This raises questions about how aware caregivers are in relation to their children's well-being and how they have been impacted on by the pandemic. Some caregivers felt that children were worried about not being able to go to school (27%), not liking wearing masks (24%) and not being able to play with others (20%). So, some caregivers were able to identify what children were worried about and for those it was linked to access to education and social interactions with their peers.

Figure 59: What concerns learners most about COVID-19



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF STRESS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS, CAREGIVERS AND LEARNERS DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC? (RQ2.2)

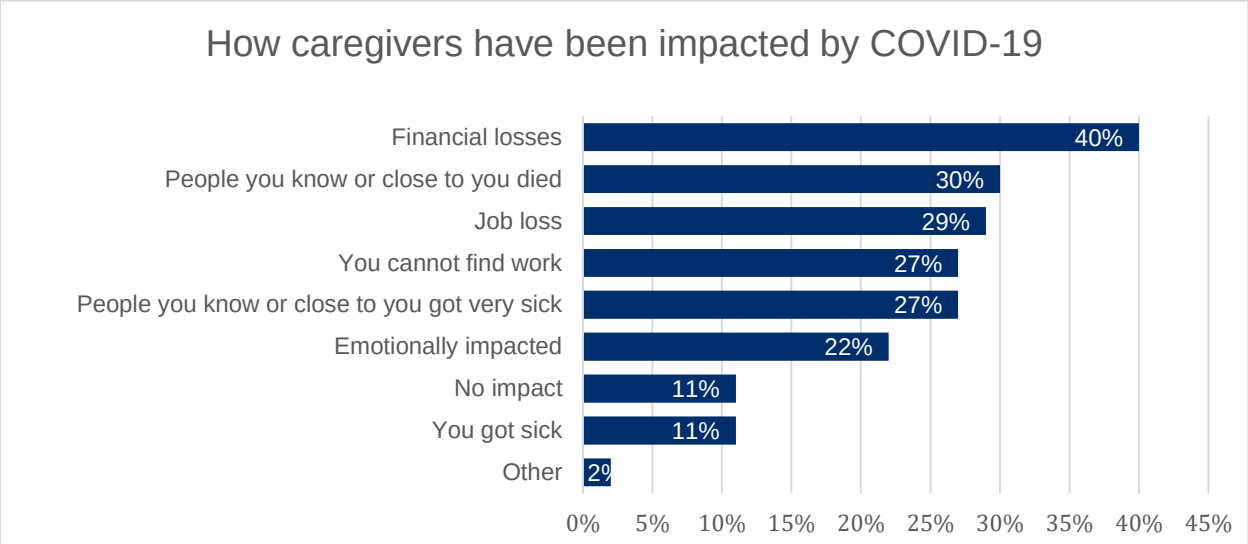
Caregivers

In what ways have caregivers been impacted by COVID-19?

Caregivers reported being impacted by COVID-19 in three main ways, namely financially, illness or loss, and emotionally. Financial impacts included financial and job losses and being unable to find work. Caregivers have not been left untouched by the financial impact of COVID-19. 30 percent of respondents indicated that someone close to them died and 27 percent indicated that someone they knew or were close to got sick. This highlights the impact that COVID-19 has had on the social networks and connections that people have, leaving people with having to deal with bereavement over and above their financial stressors. Add to this the restrictions on funeral attendance, means that many may have been deprived of the cultural and social opportunities for morning and closure. Only 11 percent of caregivers indicated that they have not been impacted by COVID-19, highlighting the degree to which this pandemic has affected people. The high level of impact on caregivers shown here raises questions about the degree to which their ability to caregiver has been affected. How much capacity and resources have they had to provide for their children given the circumstances and, in turn, how has this impacted on children.

The above is important to consider knowing that caregivers play a crucial role in stimulating their child/ren's curiosity and creativity, teaching their children skills, as well as socializing them. When caregivers are able to do this, their child/ren are less likely to experience significant learning disadvantages and are more likely to have improved well-being (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins & Weiss, 2006; Taylor, 2020). However, under lockdown, caregivers faced many difficulties which might have limited their ability to do this, including an uncertainty about their and their child/ren's futures; having to educate their child/ren at home (which is especially difficult for caregivers who have a low level of education themselves); work and routine changes; job loss and a subsequent loss of income for the family; sickness and/or death; ensuring their child/ren were following safety protocols; and heightened fear and anxiety (Gittings et al., 2020; Taylor, 2020). These added stressors may have not only reduced caregiver well-being, but also reduced the abilities of caregivers to encourage and support their child/ren's learning and well-being.

Figure 60: How caregivers have been impacted by COVID-19



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Respondents were asked several questions related to stress associated with COVID-19, which were adapted from the Perceived Stress Scale-COVID-19 (PSS-C-10). The PSS-C-10 has been used globally and is a valid and reliable tool for assessing levels of stress. Using this tool, numerous studies have demonstrated moderate to high levels of stress in both learners and their caregivers in the context of COVID-19 (e.g., AlAteeq et al., 2020; Radwan et al., 2021; Lv et al., 2020). For this group, Cronbach's alpha for the 10 items of the scale showed the questionnaire reached acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.74$. The mean score across all respondents was 21.49 with the lowest score being 0 and the highest 40[20].

Figure 61: Caregivers stress associated with COVID-19

49%

Of caregivers were nervous or stressed by COVID-19 fairly or very often

46%

Of caregivers felt unable overcome the increased difficulties due to COVID-19 fairly or very often

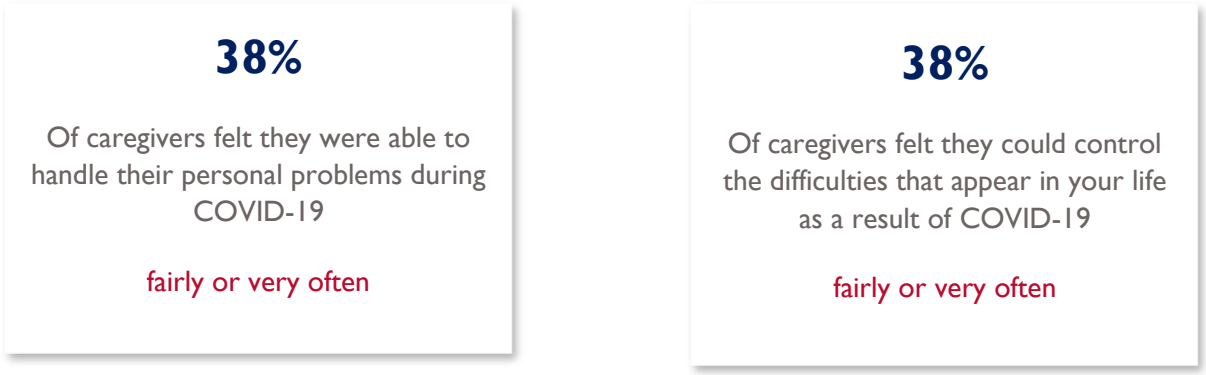
Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Respondents were asked ten questions phrased as in this example: "How often have you felt that the difficulties are increasing in these days of COVID-19 and that you feel unable to overcome them?" Four items were phrased positively, six items were phrased negatively. Respondents could choose: Never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, very often, and don't know. For the purposes of interpretation, we group the responses "fairly often" or "very often" together. Data reported are for 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

[20] *SD* = 5.02

Many respondents reported feeling stressed in relation to COVID-19, and this was mostly in relation to their sense of control over the situation. 40 percent or more of respondents selected "fairly" or "very often" for the following questions:

- How often have you been nervous or stressed by COVID-19? (49%)
- How often have you felt that the difficulties are increasing in these days of COVID-19 and that you feel unable to overcome them? (46%)
- How often do you feel as if something serious will happen unexpectedly because of COVID-19? (44%)
- How often have you felt unable to cope with the things you need to do to monitor for a possible infection? (43%)
- How often have you been upset that things are out of your control during COVID-19? (41%)
- How often do you feel that you are unable to control the important things in your life due to COVID-19? (40%)
- How often do you feel that you can control the difficulties of caregiving due to COVID-19? (40%)

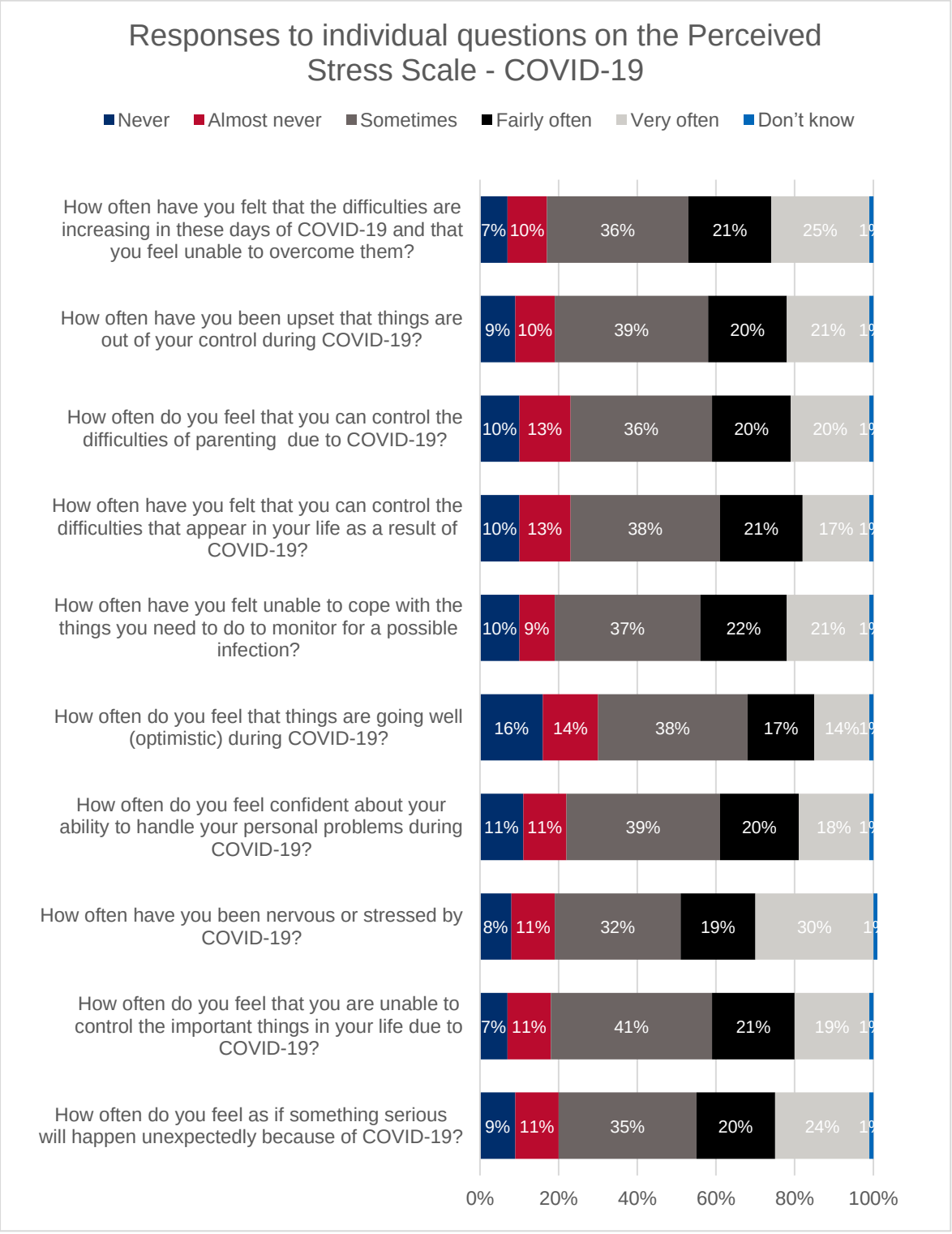
Figure 62: Caregivers' stress associated with COVID-19 (continued)



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Respondents were asked ten questions phrased as in this example: "How often have you felt that the difficulties are increasing in these days of COVID-19 and that you feel unable to overcome them?" Four items were phrased positively, six items were phrased negatively. Respondents could choose: Never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, very often, and don't know. For the purposes of interpretation, we group the responses "fairly often" or "very often" together. Data reported are for 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

On the other hand, over 30 percent of respondents felt that they were able to handle their personal problems during COVID-19 (38%); that they can control the difficulties that appear in your life as a result of COVID-19 (38%); and that they felt that things are going well (optimistic) during COVID-19 (31%).

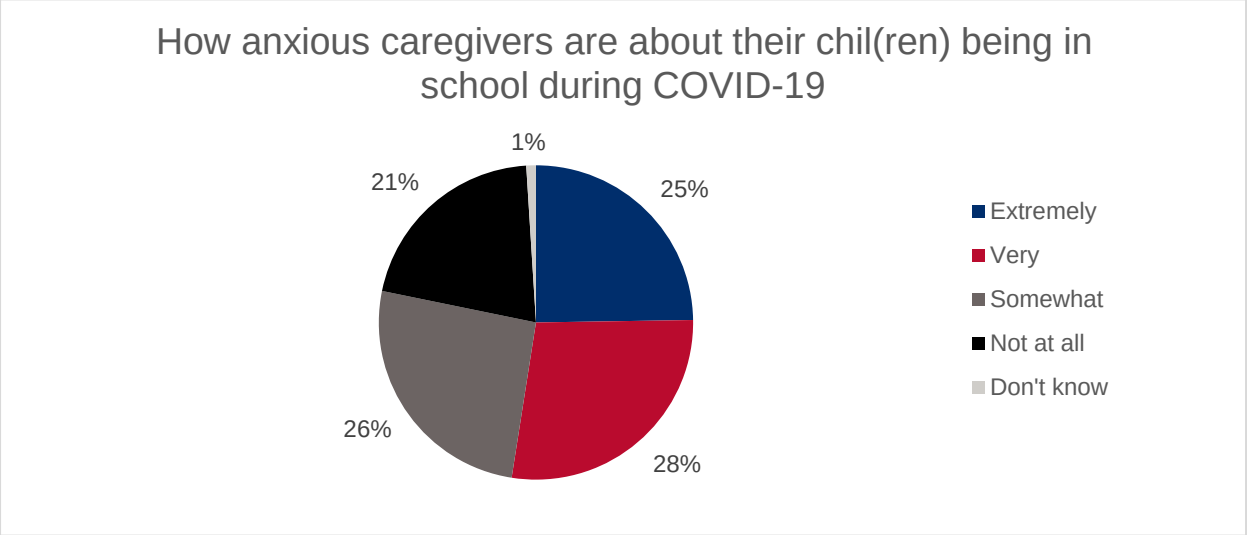
Figure 63: Caregivers' results on Perceived Stress Scale - COVID-19



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Respondents were asked ten questions phrased as in this example: "How often have you felt that the difficulties are increasing in these days of COVID-19 and that you feel unable to overcome them?" Four items were phrased positively, six items were phrased negatively. Respondents could choose: Never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, very often, and don't know. Data reported are for 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

More than half the caregivers interviewed (53%) indicated that they were extremely or very anxious about their children being in school during COVID-19.

Figure 64: Caregivers anxiety are about their child(ren) being in school during COVID-19

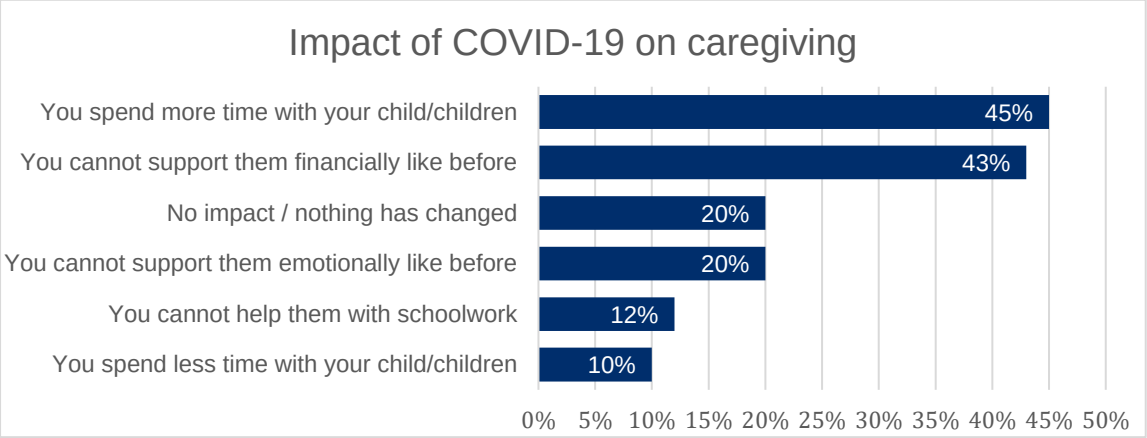


Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

In relation to what was making them anxious, most caregivers were worried that their child[ren] would get the virus at school (61%) or on their way to or from school (51%) highlighting a continued high level of fear in relation to contracting COVID-19. Caregivers were also concerned about their child[ren] (39%) or others (36%) not wearing their mask all the time. Finally, 38 percent of caregivers were worried that the school would be careless about keeping their child[ren] safe. This may be indicative of low levels of trust in schools and/or a lack of clear communication between schools and caregivers.

Just below half of the caregivers interviewed (45%) indicated that as a result of COVID-19 they have been spending more time with their children. Many indicated that they could not financially support their children as they were able to before COVID-19 highlighting the pressure that financial losses have placed on both caregivers and their children.

Figure 65: Impact of COVID-19 on caregiving

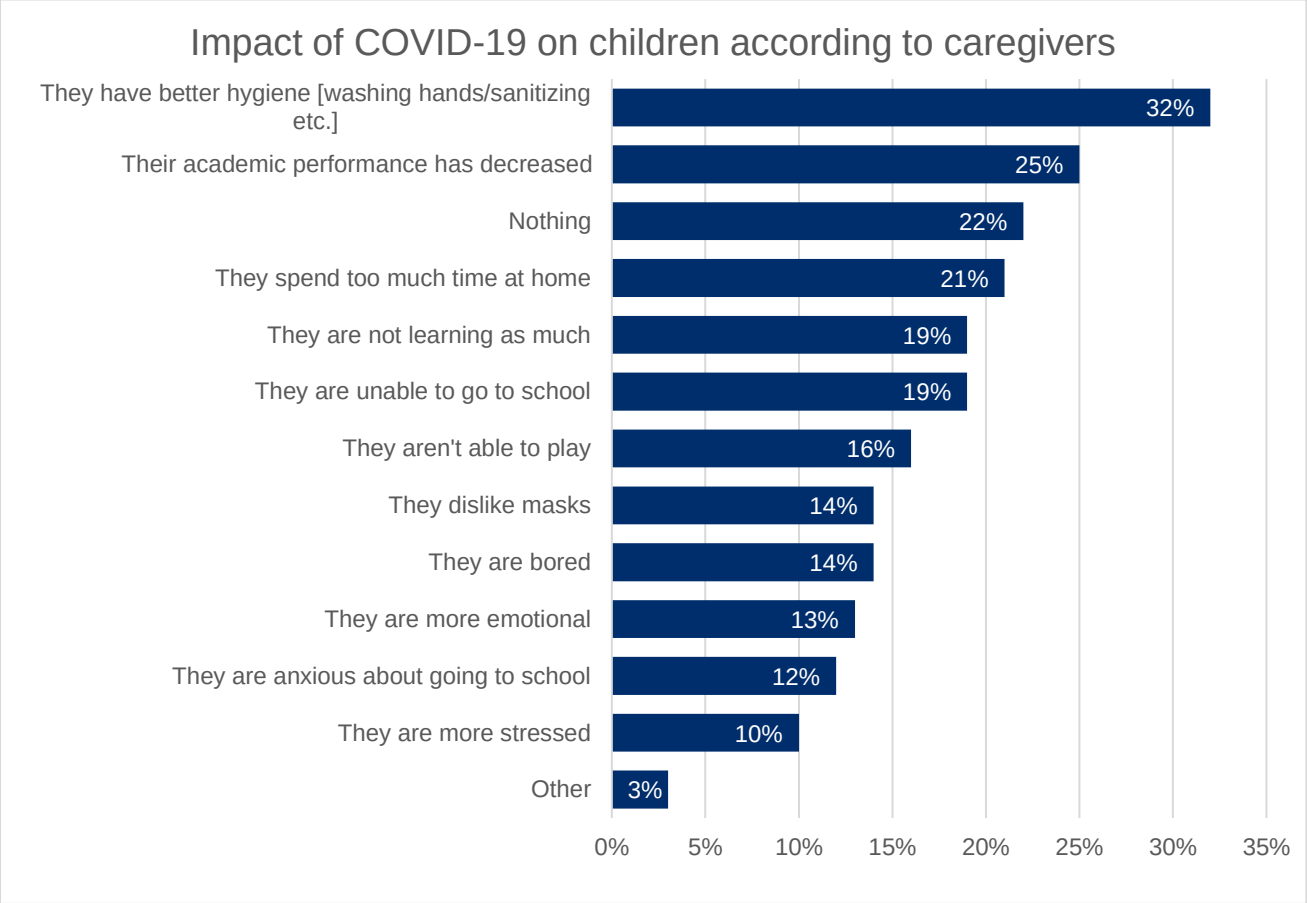


Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

In what ways do caregivers say their child(ren) have been impacted by COVID-19?

Few caregivers reported ways in which their child(ren) being impacted by COVID-19, with 22 percent indicating that COVID-19 has an no impact on their children at all. Of concern, is that a quarter of caregivers interviewed indicated that the academic performance of their child(ren) had decreased, this despite the fact that only 19 percent indicated that their children had not been able to go to school or were not learning as much. Under 15 percent of caregivers reported any emotional impacts on their children such as them being more emotional (13%), being anxious about going to school (12%), or being more stressed (10%).

Figure 66: Impact of COVID-19 on children according to caregivers



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Learners

"Not coming to school made me feel like I'm not a learner anymore" (Girl, age 12)

"I wanted to come to school, I want to be educated" (Boy, age 9)

Figure 67: Learner responses on difficulties during 2021

Source: Learner well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 3,376 learner responses from 216 schools.

This section focuses on the first question learners answered, and therefore considers difficulties learners faced in the last year. Responses to this question have been grouped into four main categories or themes – challenges related to school, challenges at home, and personal challenges, with challenges related to school and personal challenges being the most prominent themes. These main themes each comprise of their own subthemes which aim to expand upon and provide specific examples of these main themes. While many of these challenges have of course come about due to COVID-19, some respondents spoke about specific challenges directly related to COVID-19 too, and so these responses fall under the theme of COVID-19. It is also worth noting that quite a few learners – 23 percent (720) – reported that they had not experienced any challenges in the past year, while 10 percent (327) did not respond, and 0,5 percent (15) responded that they were unsure.

The table below outlines the themes and subthemes, as well as how many times these were mentioned and the percentage of learners that mentioned them:

Table 29: What have learners found difficult in the last year

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of learners mentioning
School	Subjects	565	16%
	Attendance & schedule	188	6%
	Studies suffering	145	4%
	Other (too much work, missed school, drop in school quality)	54	2%
	Total	**952**	**28%**
Home	Staying home/indoors	103	3%
	Family/household commitments	84	2%
	Homework & working from home	67	2%
	Other (distractions, unemployment, food insecurity)	64	2%
	Total	**318**	**9%**
COVID-19	PPE & protocols	92	2%
	Fear	69	2%
	Other (death due to COVID-19)	23	1%
	Total	**184**	**5%**
Personal	Less contact with friends	378	12%
	Illness	182	6%
	No playing	121	4%
	Bullying and/or fighting	94	3%
	Death	91	3%
	Total	**806**	**28%**
Nothing	Nothing has been difficult	720	23%
No response	Refused to respond	327	10%
Unsure	Learner does not know	15	0.5%

Source: Learner well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 3,376 learner responses from 216 schools.

Sixteen percent (521) of learners mentioned challenges with specific school subjects (including subjects such as Mathematics, English and Setswana) 565 times, making this the most prominent subtheme in this section. Some respondents mentioned that they struggled with these subjects because they did not have the same kind of academic support at home that they have at school:

"Mathematics subject and I couldn't find the help I needed." (Boy, age 12)

"English [has been] a challenge at school. Especially Grade 3 last year." (Boy, age 10)

Difficulty adjusting to the changes in a rotational school schedule and limited school attendance was mentioned by 6 percent (187) of respondents. This was oftentimes linked with learners' studies suffering or their marks dropping, which was mentioned 145 times by 4 percent (140) of respondents

"We had to go home and not come to school so we lost on a lot of learning time." (Girl, age 13)

"At home I struggled with school work because there was no one to assist when I didn't understand and this led to me being behind with work." (Boy, age 16)

"It was difficult at school, because COVID-19 19 was very disrupting and could not attend properly." (Girl, age 12)

Additionally, learners mentioned challenges related to their lives at home, with families and/or home in general being mentioned 286 times by 8 percent (271) of respondents. Reference was made to having to stay home or stay indoors 103 times by 3 percent (103) respondents, while 2 percent (77) of learners mentioned having family and household commitments shown in the following quotations:

"I was doing schoolwork late at night because I had to clean the house first." (Girl, age 13)

"Performing house chores like fetching the water using a wheelbarrow and 20-liter containers. This became a chore that I hated because I had to go everyday as we were all at home so water was being used more." (Girl, age 9)

"Prefer to come to school, at home my mother makes me do house chores and take care of my kid sister" (Girl, age 11)

As can be seen from the above quotations, the household commitments learners faced (which included fetching water, performing household chores like cleaning, look after young family members, and running errands) due to increased time at home sometimes meant that they had less time for their schoolwork. Interestingly, this experience was similar for female and male learners, with 2 percent of both girl and boy learners mentioning having household commitments. Related to this and briefly mentioned above, 2 percent of learners mentioned challenges related to homework and working from home. Respondents noted that online learning was difficult, and that completing homework without support from teachers or family members was challenging:

"It is tough for me to understand English. I never do my English homework. When my teacher gave me homework, I would not know how to do it at home." (Boy, age 16)

Learners also spoke of some more personal or individual challenges that they faced in the last year, with 12 percent (378) of respondents referring to difficulties relating to their friends. Respondents mentioned that they were not able to visit or play with their friends or with others due to social distancing protocols:

"I couldn't go out to play with my friends or come to school, I had to always put my mask on – (Girl, age 10)

"At school we could not understand well because of COVID-19, we had limited time to learn and also, I could not play freely with my friends because it's difficult to do social distance" – (Boy, age 12)

However, not all respondents mentioned that not being able to play with their friends or peers was the biggest concern, as bullying or fighting was mentioned by 3 percent (92) of respondents.

"I was bullied a lot by my friends and ended up not having any friends" (Girl, age 10)

"Fa bana bangle ba ntshotla ba re GA ke na Mousavi kagore mme o tlhokafetse exile keb apart diapers that pep bona ba apart tsa Mr. Price" English translation: "when other kids were bullying me because my mom died and they were saying I wear clothes from PEP while they wear clothes from Mr. Price"[21] (Girl, age 11)

It is important to consider these two forms of isolation mentioned by learners – physical isolation due to needing to stay home to comply with lockdown regulations, and emotional isolation due to bullying or fighting with friends. Therefore, learners face a myriad of forms of isolation due to social distancing and lockdowns, difficulties with friends, bullying, working from home and rotational school attendance, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) making contact difficult, illness, death, and fear (which will be discussed below). Increased isolation is concerning, as it has been linked with poor mental health outcomes, such as increased experiences of depression (Loades et al., 2020).

6 percent of learners mentioned illness when responding to this question about what has been difficult in the past year for them. These learners spoke about experiencing flu, headaches, and injuries (amongst others) as well as members of their family falling ill. Related to this, 3 percent of learners spoke about death (not due to COVID-19) as being difficult in the past year, and mentioned that family members had passed away or had come close to passing away and that this had meant other challenges for them and their families:

"I struggled with catching up on my school work, missed my friends .My father passed away, the situation at home became worse because he was the only one working at home." (Boy, age 14)

"My grandmother passed away. I was very sad. It was hard, because she was not in the house again. I had to move in with other relatives." (Girl, age 9)

Finally, learners spoke about direct challenges due to COVID-19. Interestingly, only 7 percent (228) of respondents mentioned COVID-19 directly in response to this question. Some of respondents' challenges included the use of PPE and the need to follow COVID-19 protocols which was mentioned by 2 percent (76) of respondents. While challenges related to social distancing (such as staying home and not being able to see friends) have already been discussed above, learners also spoke about the use (and challenges) of masks, sanitizer, and regular handwashing:

"At home my mother lost her job due to COVID-19. At school I was not able to hear my teachers because they were wearing masks." (Boy, age 12)

"Home, we needed water to wash hands more often and our village we lack water." (Girl, age 9)

"We didn't come to school the way we used to. I don't like wearing mask and doing social distancing. As a family we had to stay at home and not go out." (Girl, age 13)

[21] PEP and Mr Price are local clothing retailers in South Africa, with Mr Price slightly more upmarket

Fear due to COVID-19 was mentioned by 2 percent (69) respondents. Learners mentioned a fear of contracting the virus, fear due to others not following the safety protocols correctly, and worries over loved ones contracting (and/or dying from) COVID-19.

"I was always at home, feeling lonely, because I was scared that I might get COVID-19." – (Boy, age 14)

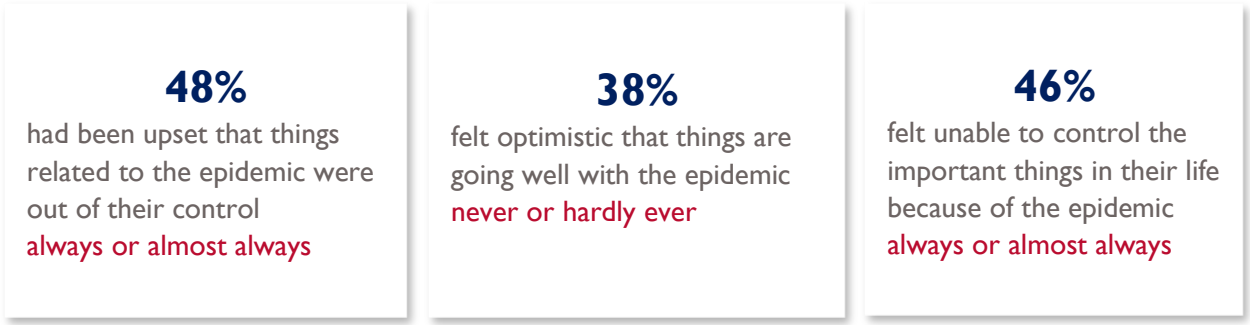
"Last year I was scared that I will die because of COVID-19. Me and my friends we were telling people to take care of themselves..." (Girl, age 12)

"My grandmother had corona, I was scared she was going to die." (Girl, age 10)

Educators

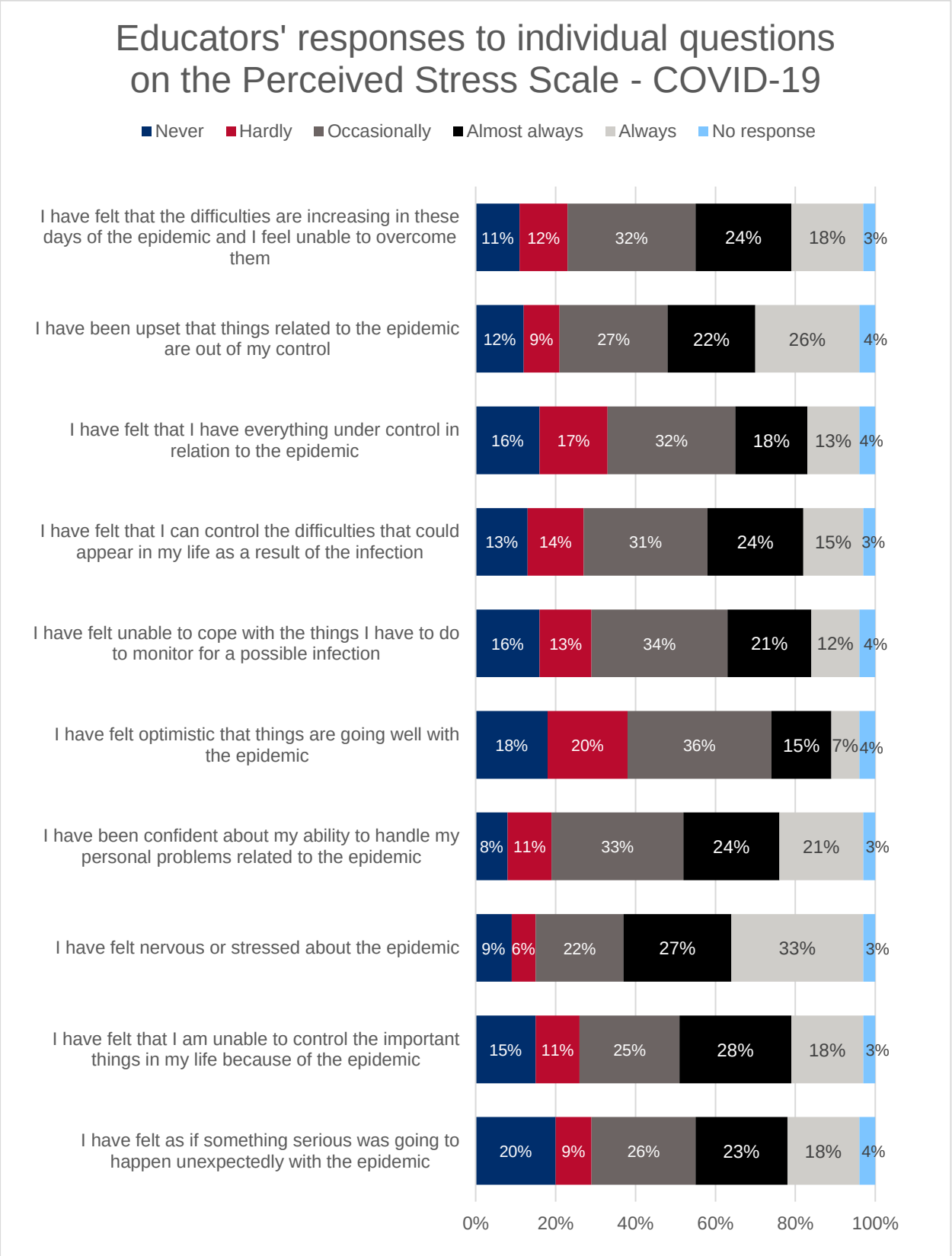
This section outlines educators' responses on the COVID-19 Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10-C). Cronbach's alpha for the 10 items of the scale showed the questionnaire reached acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.93$. 33 percent of teachers said that during the last 7 days they have 'always' felt nervous or stressed about the epidemic, and 26 percent said that they have felt unable to control the important things in their life because of the epidemic 'almost always'. The figure below outlines teachers' responses on the PSS-10-C scale. From these responses, it is clear that COVID-19 continues to be a major source of stress for educators with very few responding "Never" to any of the questions. In fact, 60 percent indicated that they always or almost always felt nervous or stressed about the epidemic. Just below half of the sample (48%) had always or almost always been upset that things related to the epidemic were out of their control, while 46 percent always or almost always felt unable to control the important things in their life because of the epidemic.

Figure 68: Educators' stress associated with COVID-19



Source: Educator well-being survey. **Notes:** Respondents were asked ten questions phrased as in this example: "How often have you felt that the difficulties are increasing in these days of COVID-19 and that you feel unable to overcome them?" Four items were phrased positively, six items were phrased negatively. Respondents could choose: Never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, very often, and don't know. For the purposes of interpretation, we group the responses "always" or "almost always" together, as well as "never" or "hardly ever". 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Figure 69: Educators' results on Perceived Stress Scale - COVID-19



Source: Educator well-being survey. **Notes:** Respondents were asked ten questions phrased as in this example: "How often have you felt that the difficulties are increasing in these days of COVID-19 and that you feel unable to overcome them?" Four items were phrased positively, six items were

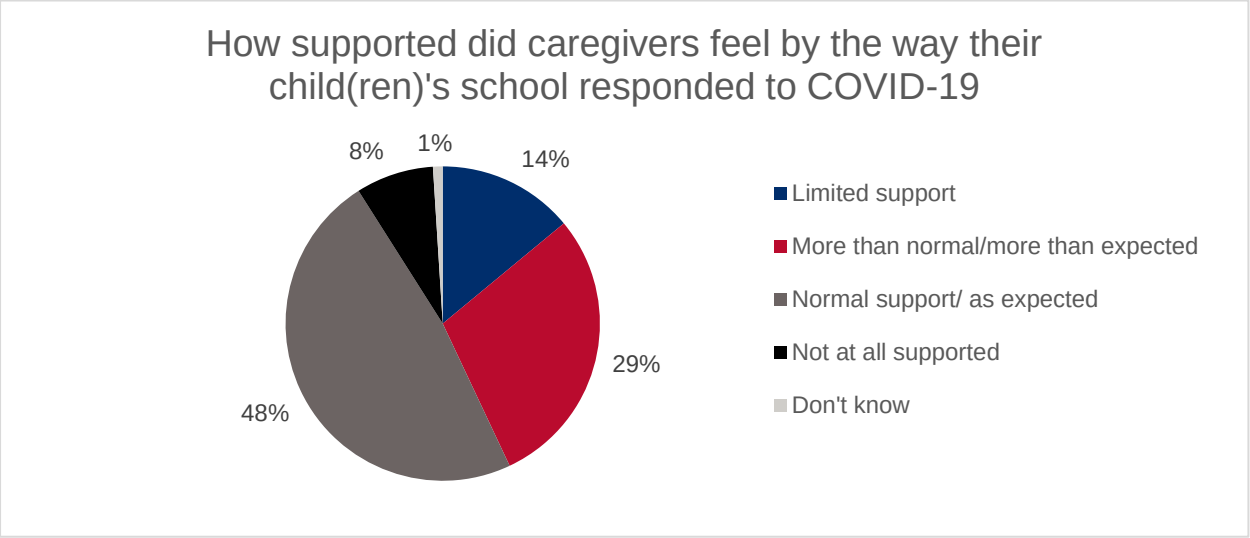
phrased negatively. Respondents could choose: Never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, very often, and don't know. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

DID TEACHERS, CAREGIVERS AND SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FEEL SUPPORTED TO DEAL WITH THE STRESS CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS TO SCHOOL? (RQ 2.3)

Caregivers

By and large, caregivers felt that the support they got from the school's response to COVID-19 was normal/as expected (48%) or more than normal/expected (29%). This indicates that schools seem to have done well in providing the support in relation to their response to COVID-19. Of concern, however, is that just below a quarter of respondents felt that the school provided limited (14%) or no support (8%). Schools may need to consider in which ways they communicate with caregivers about their responses to COVID-19.

Figure 70: How caregivers felt schools supported them

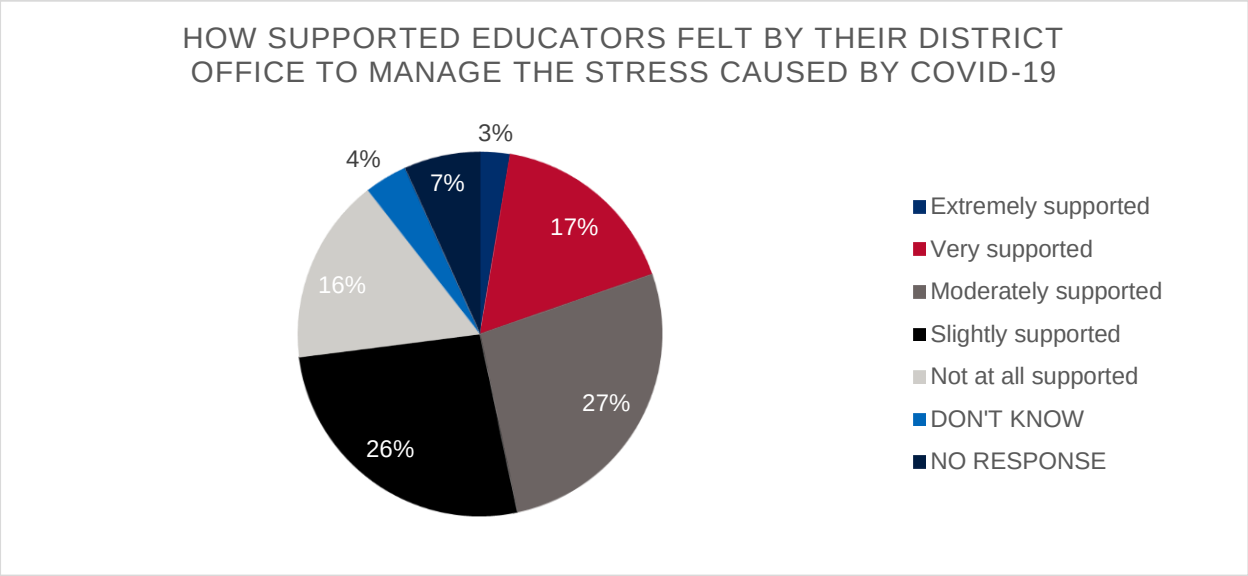


Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Educators

The following section reports on the kinds of support teachers have received during COVID-19 disruptions. In response to the question "How supported do you feel by your district office to manage the stress caused by COVID-19?", the majority of teachers felt 'moderately supported' (27%) or 'slightly supported' (26%), 17 percent felt 'very supported', while 16 percent felt 'not at all supported'.

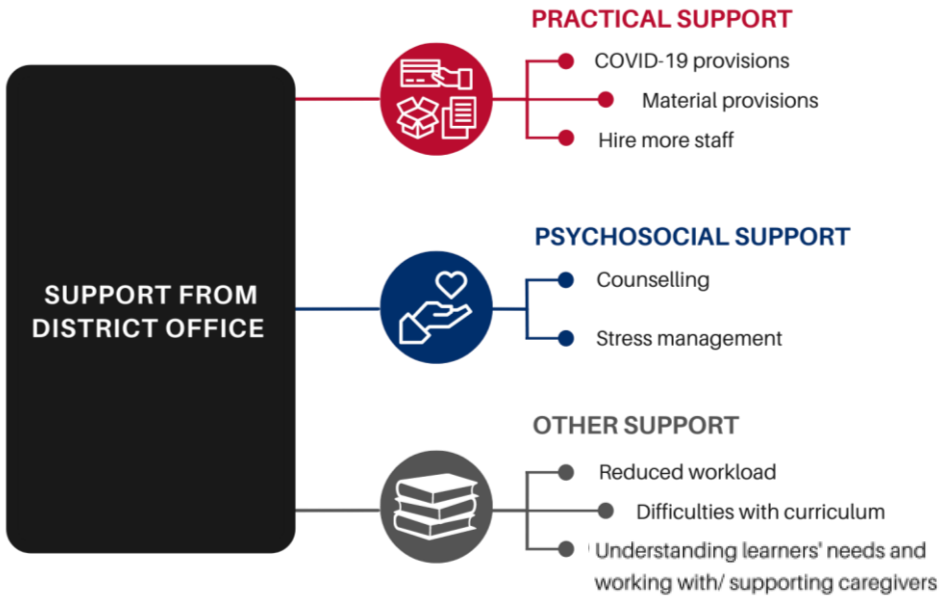
Figure 71: How districts supported educators to manage COVID-19 stress



Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

As a follow-up open-ended question, educators were asked what else their district office could do to support their school with the stress caused by COVID-19. 1 percent of educators said that they were unsure, 2 percent of responses were unable to be interpreted or coded, and 19 percent had no response to this question. A further 2 percent reported that there is nothing that the district office could be doing differently. The themes that emerged can be placed within three broad thematic areas namely: Practical support, Psychosocial support, and Other support. These are further broken down into subthemes, which will be discussed in detail in this report.

Figure 72: District Office Support to educators



Source: Educator well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

The table below outlines the three broad themes and subthemes, the number of times they were mentioned, as well as the percentage of educators mentioning them.

Table 30: Support from district office for educators

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of educators mentioning
Practical support	COVID-19 provisions (e.g., PPE)	308	20%
	Material provisions (e.g., infrastructure)	225	15%
	Hire more staff	182	13%
	Frequent communication and monitoring	129	10%
	Workshops and trainings	84	7%
	Total	**928**	**65%**
Psychosocial support	Counselling, stress management	**388**	**27%**
Other forms of support	Reduce workload for teachers	43	3%
	Difficulties with curriculum	40	3%
	Understanding learners' needs	21	2%
	Supporting caregivers	15	1%
	Rotation	14	1%
	Total	**133**	**10%**
No response	Did not respond to the question	**227**	**19%**
Nothing	There is nothing district office should do differently	**18**	**2%**
Un-codeable	Unable to be interpreted or coded	**18**	**2%**
Unsure	They don't know	**8**	**1%**

Source: Educator well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Practical support

Forms of practical support was mentioned over 900 times by 65 percent of educators. These include COVID-19 provisions (e.g., PPE), material provisions (e.g., infrastructure), hiring more staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, and cleaners), as well as more frequent communication and monitoring to provide support as and when it is due.

COVID-19 provisions

The need for COVID-19 provisions was mentioned over 300 times by 20 percent of educators. Provisions such as personal protective equipment (PPE, including masks and sanitizer), more information on how to contain the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and immediate action to be taken when there is a case of COVID-19 in the schools.

"The district must try to provide schools with the necessary equipment or furniture to help minimize the spread of infections on learners and provide adequate COVID-19 personnel to assist educators with COVID-19-related issues during a case of an emergency." (Male, 25)

"The district must take this into serious consideration, we had several cases, but no support or action taken concerning our learners and educators." (Male, 44)

"District must visit our school to look at the situation that we have to face every day. There are no extra masks for learners in case they forget them at home. District must always make sure that there is water. Sometimes we work without water on the situation that we are currently facing, meaning some other protocols we don't adhere to." (Female, 35)

Material provisions

Material provisions was expressed 225 times by 15 percent of educators. This includes infrastructure such as mobile classes and furniture (e.g., tables and chairs) to be able to accommodate social distancing and allow learners to attend school every day, as well as more teaching and learning materials as learners are unable to share or take these resources home with them.

"Provide learners with materials like tables and chairs for social distancing." (Female, 50)

"If the school was provided with extra classrooms, e.g., mobile. I think the stress could be less and learning and teaching could improve." (Female, 53)

"They must try to sort out the issue of resources, because this pandemic made it difficult for learners to share." (Male, age undisclosed)

Hiring more staff

13 percent of educators expressed the need for more staff, including teachers, teacher assistants, and cleaners to help ensure COVID-19 compliance in schools, clean classrooms and bathrooms regularly, and ease the workload burden on educators.

"To give more teachers to assist as we are being challenged by multi-grade teaching." (Female, 51)

"They must employ other educators because we are very much loaded and its very stressful to us." (Male, 43)

"By giving us a relief teacher in cases where there is an infected teacher, so that when the teacher returns she/he must not be stressed by too much work. And also give moral support to the infected teacher during isolation process." (Female, 47)

"Ensuring that there are enough general workers at schools so that the surfaces are washed regularly, desks and tables, sanitizing not forgetting handles. Cleanliness is my greatest concern because the school is dirty hence the spread of COVID-19 in schools." (Female, 46)

Frequent communication and monitoring

10 percent of educators spoke about needing the district office to improve their communication with the school and visit more frequently to determine what kinds of support the schools need at any particular time.

"Often visit the school to witness what the teachers are facing on regular basis like learner absenteeism. So that they can convey the message to the higher levels of the department for the syllabus to be reduced and the number of tasks to be reduced as well, especially with languages." (Female, 36)

"Do regular checks even if it's not physically, through surveys, SMSs, and WhatsApp's, and do follow-ups based on the challenges outlined by teachers at ground level." (Female, 38)

"They should always consult with the school-based educators how they can help support them because they are the ones dealing with learners as first confrontation." (Female, 60)

"Reduce the level of confusing communication. Establish better communication and give messages on time." (Male, 29)

Training and workshops

In addition to frequent communication and monitoring, 7 percent of educators said that the district office should provide workshops and training relating to COVID-19 or how to deliver the new adjusted curriculum.

"Provide adequate resources and timeous feedback regarding the change of the curriculum and how assessment should be conducted in this time of COVID-19. Provide training on how to teach and cover the syllabus during this pandemic." (Male, 31)

"Training teachers in online teaching." (Female, 30)

"They must continue to support us, whatever the situation of this pandemic may be. I appreciate what different support such as training, workshops had been conducted because it was not easy. We as stakeholders had to support them and work together as always." (Female, 56)

Psychosocial support

In addition to practical support, psychosocial support was mentioned 388 times by 27 percent of educators. This includes regular professional counselling to teachers, learners, and support staff who are affected by the pandemic, and ways to manage their stress.

"They have to give educators counselling and learners also because some have been through difficulties of losing their loved ones. Some were also affected by the pandemic physically and emotionally." (Female, 51)

"The district to appoint a team that will manage stress across the whole district, on a regular basis." (Female, 52)

"Training on how to support learner well-being, individual session with the counsellor to discuss what I am struggling with, training on adjusted ATP's, less pressure on finishing the curriculum, group session with other teachers to discuss our stresses and support each other." (Female, 50)

"Should be considerate of the effects of the pandemic and organize psychological counselling to keep teachers minds in good condition to be able to deliver the curriculum and support learners through COVID-19 challenges." (Male, 53)

Other forms of support

Other forms of support mentioned include reducing the workload for teachers (3%), difficulties with the curriculum (3%), learners (2%) and caregivers (1%), and rotation (1%). Reducing the workload that teachers are faced with was mentioned 43 times by 3 percent of educators.

"To try and minimize admin work because there is a lot of paperwork of which we sometimes become overwhelmed." (Female, 38)

"Check on the workload of teachers especially those teachers who were infected." (Female, 56)

"Decrease the amount of admin work we have to do so that we focus fully on the learners." (Female, 40)

Three percent of educators also mentioned difficulties with the curriculum coverage.

"I would like the district office to revise the annual teaching plan (ATP) again." (Male, 27)

"ATPs could be adjusted according to learners attending rotationally. The work can be adjusted by those days so that we as teachers and learners can be able to manage and cover the curriculum." (Female, 30)

"The curriculum coverage is impossible in some areas as most of our learners are not coping with homework and the level of absenteeism is high." (Female, 56)

Two percent of educators mentioned learners specifically.

"To help us on how to teach learners with learning barriers." (Female, 52)

"I think the district office need to take into consideration factors affecting teaching in schools. The issue of learners not attending on daily basis has affected their performance hence we have a decline in the results." (Female, age undisclosed)

"The huge numbers of learners drop out due to the pandemic." (Female, 35)

"They should help us with learners who are not adhering to the rules of COVID-19 rules and [the] dangers [thereof]." (Female, 60)

With regards to the rotation of learners (1%), responses are contradictory. For instance, while some educators believe provisions should be made such that learners should be attending school full time.

"The district office suggested that all learners to attend school, no more rotation." (Female, 57)

"Require more classrooms to avoid rotation because where learners are rotating teachers are not effective." (Female, age undisclosed)

Others suggest such that all learners should not come to school at once.

"They should not allow all learners to come to school. Learners should come by groups to school." (Male, 55)

"Overcrowded classes should rotate due to lack of classrooms and furniture." (Female, 52)

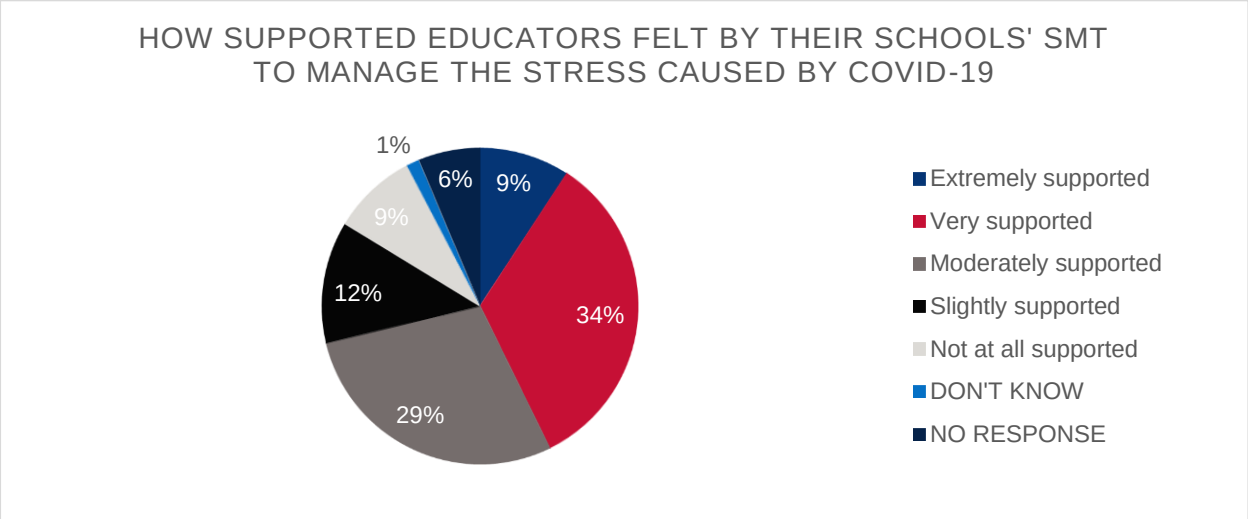
One percent of educators mentioned the need to reach out to the caregivers.

"To involve caregivers in the education of their children because teachers do their part, and the caregivers have to monitor their children's work especially that learners are attending rotationally. Time and caregiver involvement are key factors." (Gender undisclosed, 52)

"Educate our caregivers on the importance of learners attending school and that they are safe at school." (Female, 51)

Furthermore, educators were asked how supported they feel by their schools SMT to manage the stress caused by COVID-19. 34 percent of teachers felt 'very supported', 29 percent felt 'moderately supported', 9 percent felt extremely supported, while 9 percent felt 'not at all supported'.

Figure 73: School support to educators to manage stress

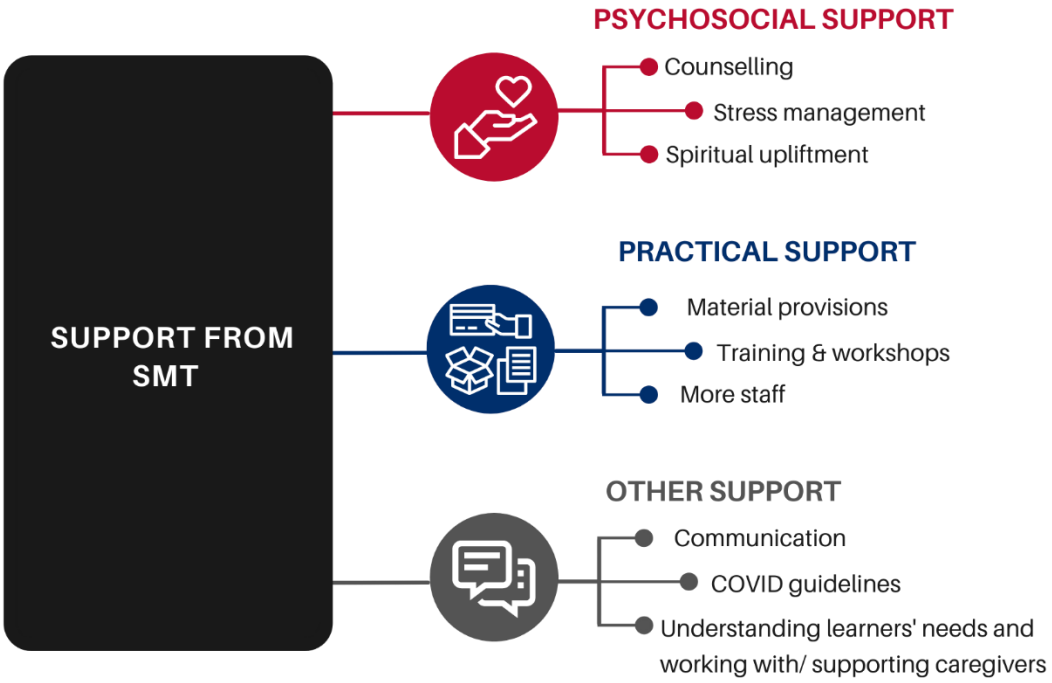


Source: Educator well-being survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

As a follow-up open-ended question, educators were asked what else their SMT could do to support their school with the stress caused by COVID-19. 1 percent of educators said that they were unsure, 4 percent of responses were unable to be interpreted or coded, and 29 percent had no response to this question. A further 6 percent reported that there is nothing that SMT should be doing differently.

The themes that emerged can be placed within three broad thematic areas namely: Psychosocial support, Practical support, and Other support. These are further broken down into subthemes, which will be discussed in detail in this report.

Figure 74: What educators want from SMTs to help manage stress



Source: Educator well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

The table below outlines the three broad themes and subthemes, the number of times they were mentioned, as well as the percentage of educators mentioning them.

Table 31: Educators request for additional support

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of educators mentioning
Practical support	COVID-19 provisions (e.g., PPE)	308	20%
	Material provisions (e.g., infrastructure)	225	15%
	Hire more staff	182	13%
	Frequent communication and monitoring	129	10%
	Workshops and trainings	84	7%
	Total	**928**	**65%**
Psychosocial support	Counselling, stress management	**388**	**27%**
Other forms of support	Reduce workload for teachers	43	3%
	Difficulties with curriculum	40	3%
	Understanding learners' needs	21	2%
	Supporting caregivers	15	1%

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of educators mentioning
	Rotation	14	1%
	Total	**133**	**10%**
No response	Did not respond to the question	**227**	**19%**
Nothing	There is nothing district office should do differently	**18**	**2%**
Un-codeable	Unable to be interpreted or coded	**18**	**2%**
Unsure	They don't know	**8**	**1%**

Source: Educator well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Psychosocial support

Forms of psychosocial support were suggested over 300 times by 26 percent of educators, including professional counselling, stress management, and spiritual upliftment.

"They can support us by holding group sessions whereby we discuss problems that we come across every day and how to resolve them." (Female, 53)

"Provide a counsellor for those who go through traumas of COVID-19 (loss of a family member), etc." (Female, 29)

"Organize religion leaders to uplift educators." (Male, 52)

"Provide support structure who can be accessible at any time on digital platform." (Female, 48)

Practical support

In addition to psychosocial support, practical support measures were mentioned over 200 times by 19 percent of educators. These include material provisions, trainings and workshops, more staff, and reduced workload for teachers.

Material provisions

Material provisions, such as PPE and facilities, were mentioned 128 times by 9 percent of educators.

"Improve on the paucity of resources and hugely rectify the availability of technological equipment - internet/printers/copiers/toners/access of sent material." (Female, 35)

"Reduce transmission by provision of mobile classrooms for learners." (Female, 48)

"SMT to support educators with all necessary teaching and learning materials." (Female, 42)

"Provide us with all the necessities that can protect us from infection, e.g., PPE's regularly, clean amenities that have soap, towels, sanitizers, toilet paper, etc." (Female, 52)

Training and workshops

Five percent of educators requested training and workshops from their SMT regarding COVID-19 or the adjusted curriculum.

"Mini workshops to help educators with trimmed ATPs." (Male, 30)

"The SMT is really trying so hard, but to add on that, I think they should introduce a session whereby learners are taught more about this pandemic." (Female, 34)

"Need training on how to handle cases of COVID-19." (Male, 48)

More staff, less workload and curriculum

Two percent of educators requested more members of staff, 2 percent requested the workload to be reduced, and a further 1 percent mentioned the curriculum.

"Hire more screeners because our school numbers are so high." (Female, 59)

"Motivate the department to increase educators, classrooms, and bring back assistant teachers." (Female, 53)

"Unrealistically heavy workload, by reducing our workload will reduce stress." (Female, 48)

"Provide maybe with extra classes of 30 minutes (daily) to reduce the pressure of curriculum coverage." (Male, 60)

Other forms of support

Altogether 19 percent of educators mentioned other ways that SMT could support their schools, such as better communication (8%), following COVID-19 guidelines (7%), and 4 percent mentioned learners and/or caregivers.

Communication

Eight percent of educators expressed the need for enhanced communication from their SMT.

"Be open and transparent about the COVID-19 cases in our school. It should not be kept a secret." (Female, 36)

"Providing regular updates about any new developments of COVID-19." (Male, 48)

"Lessen stigma. Provide more education, especially procedural-related information." (Male, age undisclosed)

"Regular communication and have a listening ear if there are problems." (Female, 62)

COVID-19 guidelines

Implementing, following, and monitoring adherence of COVID-19 procedures was mentioned over 100 times by 7 percent of educators.

"Ensure that learners adhere to social distancing and wearing of masks be their priority. Enforce the protocols of COVID-19 to all in the premises." (Male, 57)

"To make sure that classrooms are fumigated each and every week." (Female, age undisclosed)

"They should be consistent and never compromise when it comes to COVID-19 regulations and guidelines." (Male, 28)

Caregivers and learners

2.6 percent of educators mentioned topics related to learners.

"SMT should check if the system we use for attendance is benefitting learners." (Female, 37)

"Be realistic in terms of learners pace as well as how the pandemic has affected that." (Female, 26)

"Do follow up on the learner drop out." (Female, 35)

1.7 percent of educators mentioned caregivers.

"The caregivers need to be supported as well so that they can release learners to come to school to reduce the number of dropouts in our school." (Female, 56)

"More caregiver involvement, since COVID-19, caregivers have distanced themselves from school." (Female, 31)

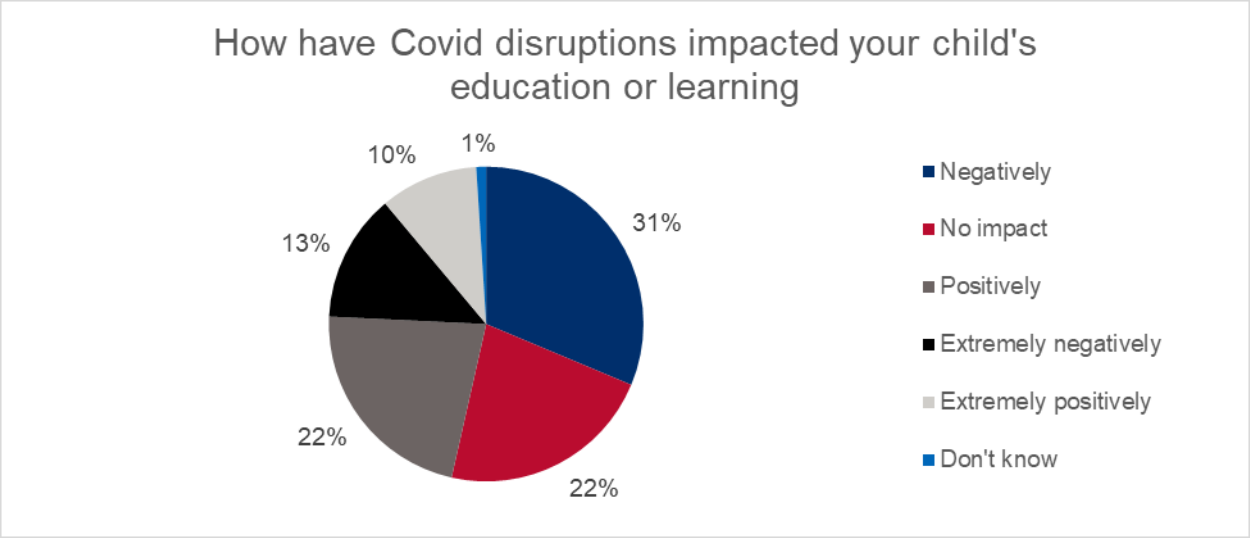
"Encourage caregivers to see if learners are wearing mask if they come to school." (Female, 47)

1.4 HAS THE LEVEL OF STRESS CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED THE ABILITY OF SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND LEARNERS TO TEACH / LEARN? (RQ2.4)

Caregivers

Many caregivers felt that the disruptions caused by COVID-19 have had a negative (31%) or extremely negative (13%) impact on their child(ren)'s education or learning. This aligns with the section above in which caregivers felt that COVID-19 has resulted in a decline in academic performance. Of interest is that 44 percent of caregivers indicated COVID-19 has either had no (22%) or a positive (22%) impact on their child(ren)'s education or learning. It is possible that the parents who participated in the telephonic interviews, misinterpreted the question or the meaning of the phrase "positive impact" We explore patterns in the responses of these parents further and determine in what ways has COVID-19 positively impacted on learning and education impacted on learning and education.

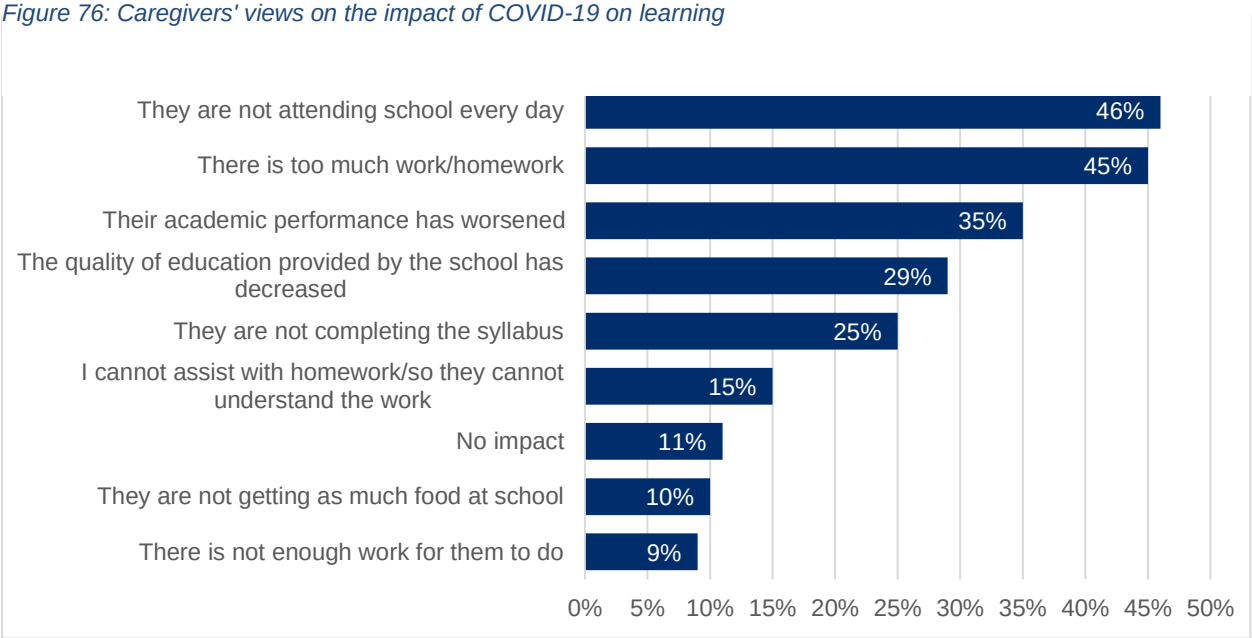
Figure 75: Caregivers' views on how COVID-19 has disrupted learning



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

When asked about the ways in which their child(ren)'s learning/education has been disrupted by COVID-19, most caregivers spoke about them not attending every day, followed by saying that there was too much work/homework. Given the concerns over the learning losses, for caregivers to highlight the high volume of work/homework as a concern of theirs is of interest. Again, caregivers highlighted that their child(ren)'s academic performance has decreased which may be expected given the disruptions that have occurred. A smaller proportion of caregivers felt that the quality of education that the schools were providing has decreased (29%) and that they feel that the syllabus will not be completed (25%). So, although caregivers were concerned about the disruptions that COVID-19 has caused to their child(ren)'s learning and education, the attempts made to counter this disruption (such as sending much work home) has also been of concern and caregivers feel that their child(ren)'s education has been negatively impacted.

Figure 76: Caregivers' views on the impact of COVID-19 on learning



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response options allowed for this question. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Caregivers indicating that COVID-19 has had a positive/extremely positive impact on their child(ren)'s education compared to those who did not

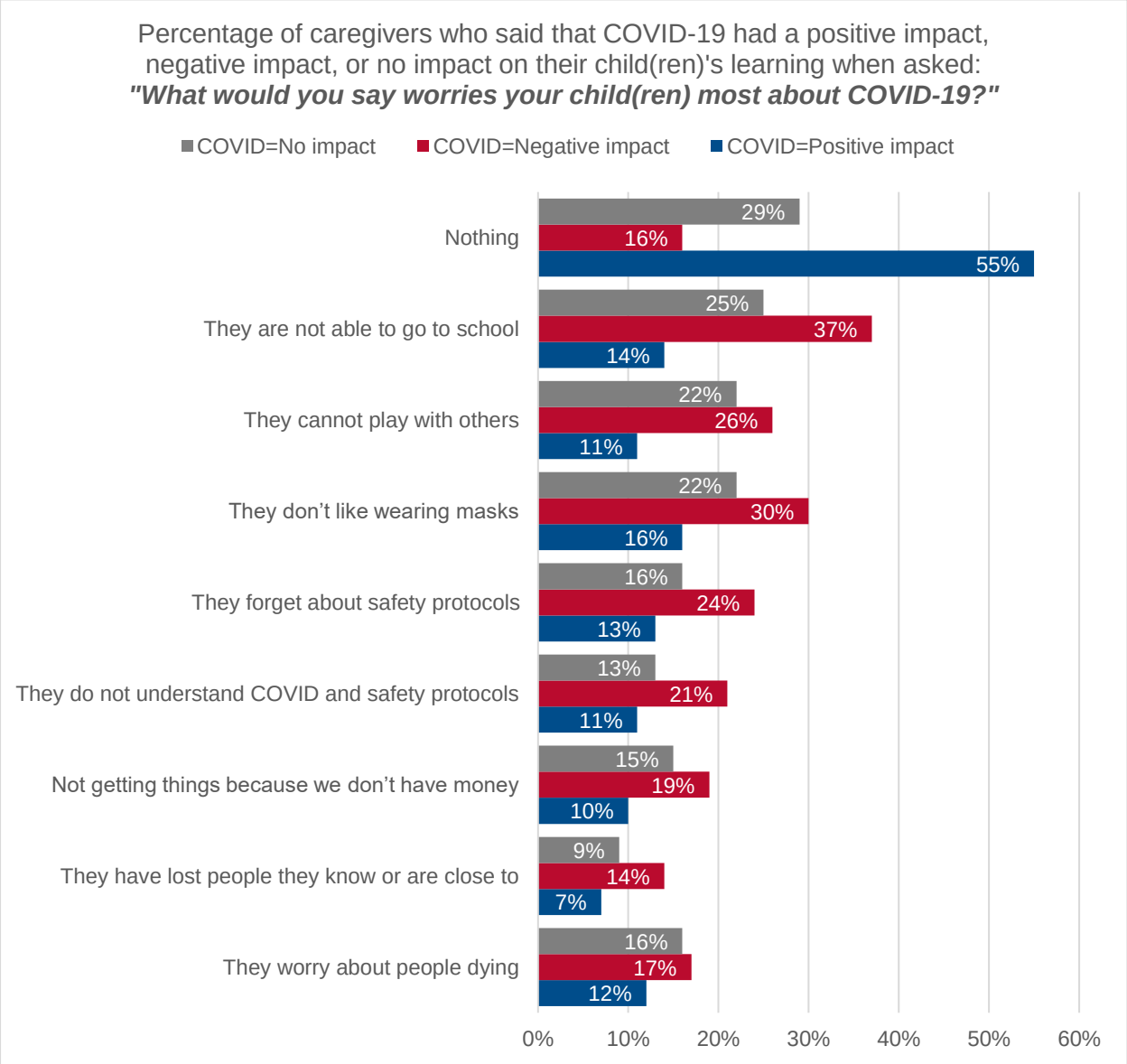
It should be emphasized that 33 percent of caregivers indicated that COVID-19 has had a "positive" or "extremely positive" impact on their child(ren)'s education. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to explore the differences in responses between these caregivers in comparison to those who said that COVID-19 has had a negative impact (44%) and those who indicated COVID-19 has had no impact on their child(ren)'s learning (22%). In response to the question "How positively or negatively have COVID-19 disruptions impacted your child's education or learning?", 24 caregivers said they do not know, and 2 caregivers refused to answer (1%). These respondents were excluded from this analysis, leaving Altogether 1,447 respondents.

For the demographic variables, there were no statistically significant differences in gender and age between caregivers who indicated that COVID-19 had a positive impact, negative impact, and no impact on their child(ren)'s education. 80 percent of caregivers who said that COVID-19 has had a positive impact were mothers, while 79 percent of mothers said it had a negative impact, and 78 percent of caregivers in the no impact group were mothers. In each group, the majority of caregivers were over the age of 35 years (negative impact group = 62%; positive impact group = 63%, no impact group = 63%). There were statistically significant differences in level of education between these groups. The number of caregivers who had below Grade 11 in the positive impact group (40%) was similar to the no impact group (39%), but significantly higher compared to the negative impact group (30%). In addition, significantly more caregivers in the positive impact group had primary schooling (16%), compared to the negative impact (10%) and no impact (10%) groups which were similar. Significant differences also emerged when looking at employment status. For instance, significantly more caregivers in the positive impact group were unemployed but looking for work (22%) compared to the negative impact (12%) and no impact groups (12%).

When asked what they would say worries their child(ren) most about COVID-19, the differences in responses between the three groups (positive impact, negative impact, and no impact) were all statically significant. More than half the caregivers who indicated that COVID-19 had a positive

impact on their child(ren) said that nothing worries their children (55%) compared to 29 percent of caregivers who indicated that COVID-19 had no impact on their child(ren)'s education and 16 percent who said COVID-19 had a negative impact. Similar numbers of caregivers in each of the three groups expressed that their children worry about people dying (no impact = 16%; negative impact = 17%; positive impact = 12%), and some of these differences were statistically significant.

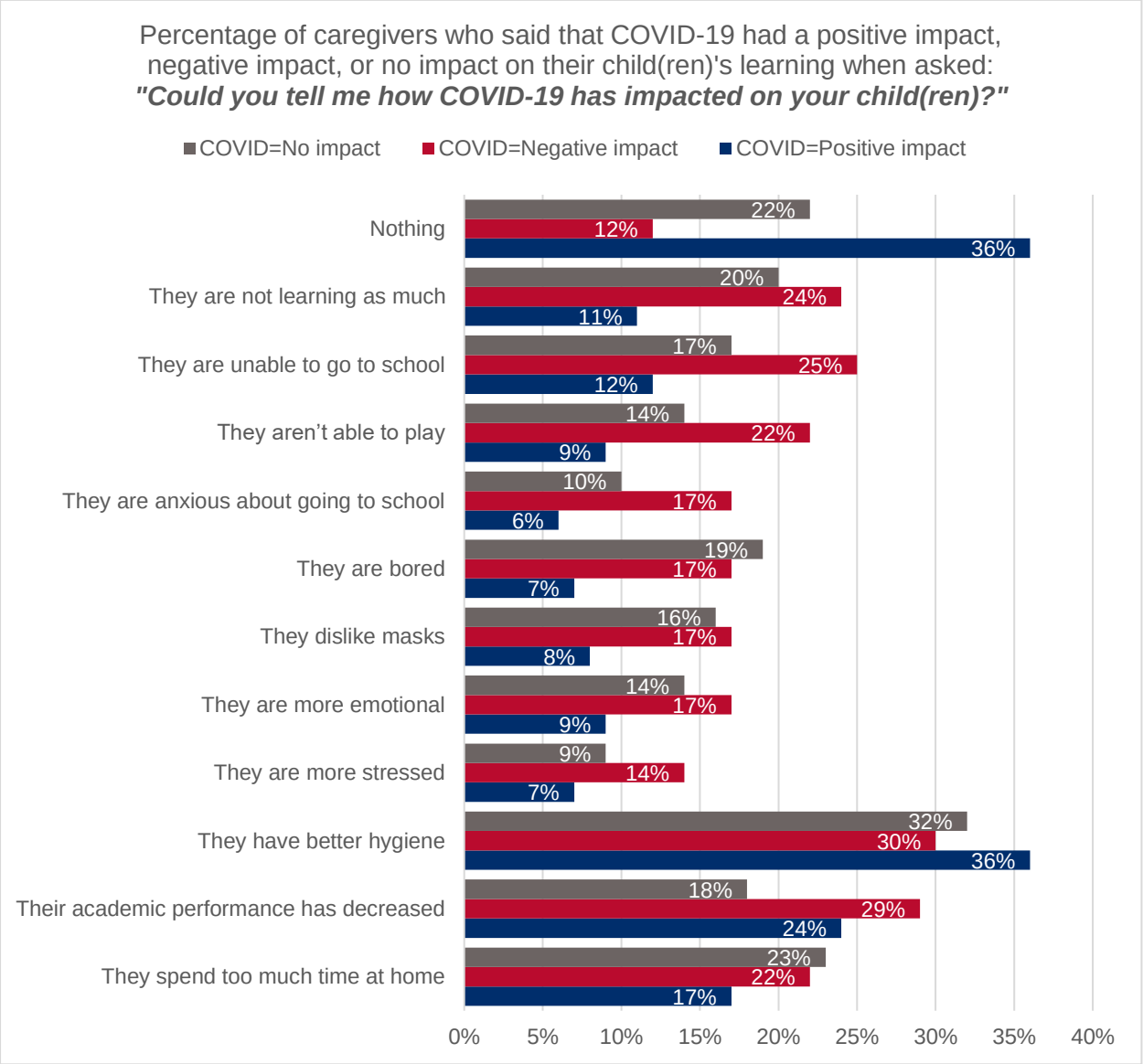
Figure 77: Caregivers' detailed response on what concerns their child



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Caregivers were asked how COVID-19 has impacted their child(ren) and whether they have noticed any changes in how their child(ren) are behaving compared to before. Significantly more caregivers in the positive impact group said that nothing has impacted their children (36%) compared to the no impact group (22%) and the negative impact group (12%). While 24 percent of caregivers in the negative impact group and 20 percent in the positive impact group said that their children are not learning as much during COVID-19, only 11 percent of caregivers in the positive impact group reported the same. Similar percentages of caregivers in each group said that their children have better hygiene practices, such as washing their hands and sanitizing (no impact = 32%; negative impact = 30%; positive impact = 36%). Notably, 24 percent of caregivers who said that COVID-19 has had a positive impact on their child(ren)'s education also said that their child's academic performance has decreased, compared to 29 percent of caregivers in the negative impact group and 18 percent in the no impact group.

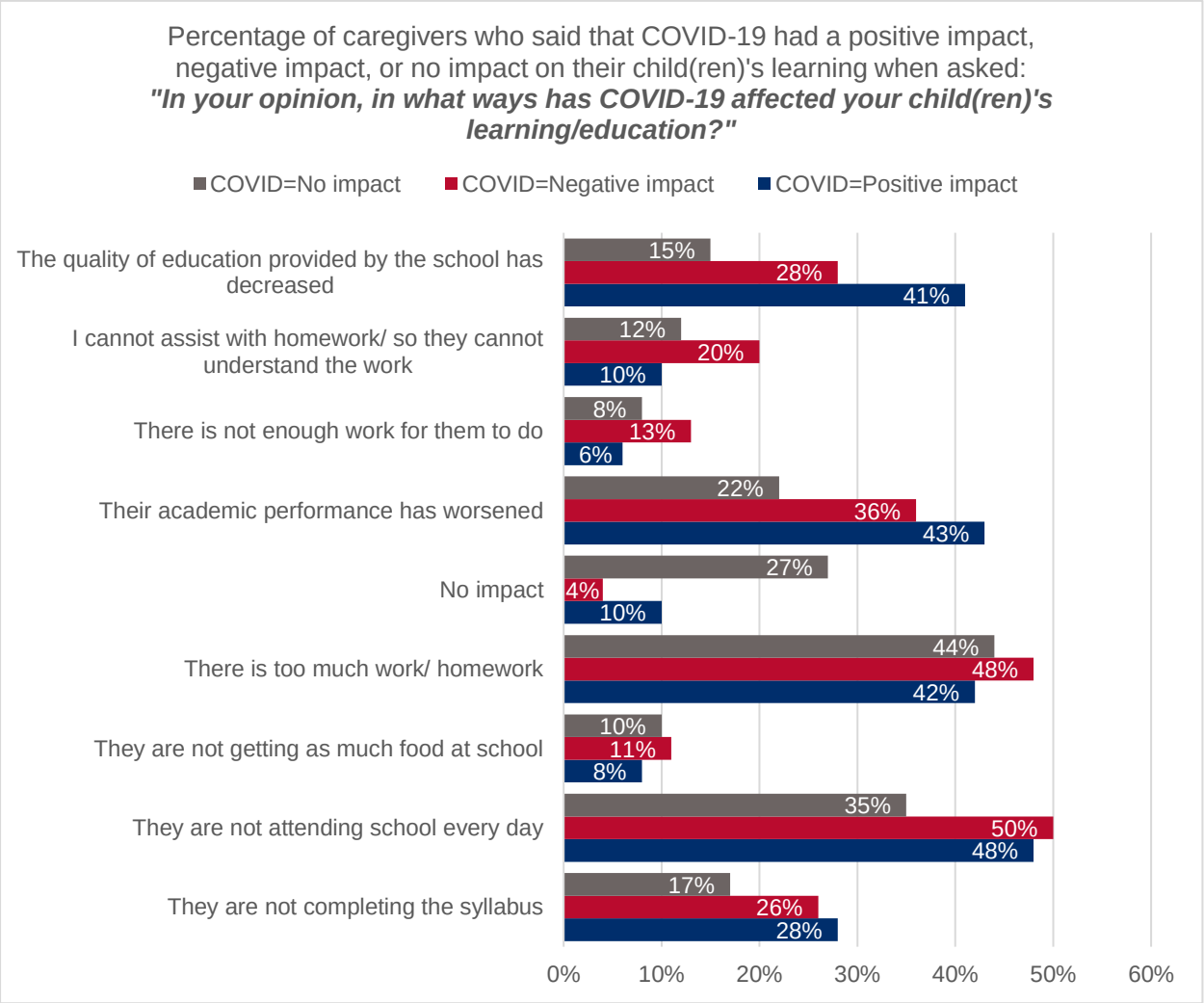
Figure 78: Caregivers' detailed view on the impact of COVID-19 on their child



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response option. Spontaneous mention. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

When asked in what ways COVID-19 has affected their child(ren)'s learning/education, significantly more caregivers in the positive impact group said that the quality of education provided by the school has decreased (41%) and that their child's academic performance has worsened (43%), compared to the negative impact group (28% and 36%, respectively) and the no impact group (15% and 22%, respectively). The fact that more of the caregivers in the positive impact group report that quality of schooling has dropped, is a contradiction that may relate to caregivers' misinterpretation of the phrase "positive impact". Similar numbers in each of the three groups reported that children are not getting as much food at school (no impact = 10%; negative impact = 11%; positive impact = 8%).

Figure 79: Caregivers' detailed view of how COVID-19 has impacted education



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response options allowed for this question. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

The table below outlines the percentage of caregivers in each group who responded "Yes" to questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their child(ren), with significance levels.

Table 32: Caregivers detailed response on the impact of COVID-19 on their child

Question	Response	Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	p
What would you say worries your child(ren) most about COVID-19?	They don't like wearing masks	16%	30%	22%	0.000
	They forget about safety protocols	13%	24%	16%	0.000
	They cannot play with others	11%	26%	22%	0.000
	They do not understand COVID-19 and safety protocols	11%	21%	13%	0.000
	They are not able to go to school	14%	37%	25%	0.000
	Not getting things because we don't have money	10%	19%	15%	0.000
	They worry about people dying	12%	17%	16%	0.027
	They have lost people they know or are close to	7%	14%	9%	0.000
	Nothing	55%	16%	29%	0.000
Could you tell me how COVID-19 has impacted on your child(ren)?	They have better hygiene	36%	30%	32%	0.044
	They are bored	7%	17%	19%	0.000
	They aren't able to play	9%	22%	14%	0.000
	They are more emotional	9%	17%	14%	0.000
	They are unable to go to school	12%	25%	17%	0.000
	They dislike masks	8%	17%	16%	0.000
	They spend too much time at home	17%	22%	23%	0.046
	They are not learning as much	11%	24%	20%	0.000

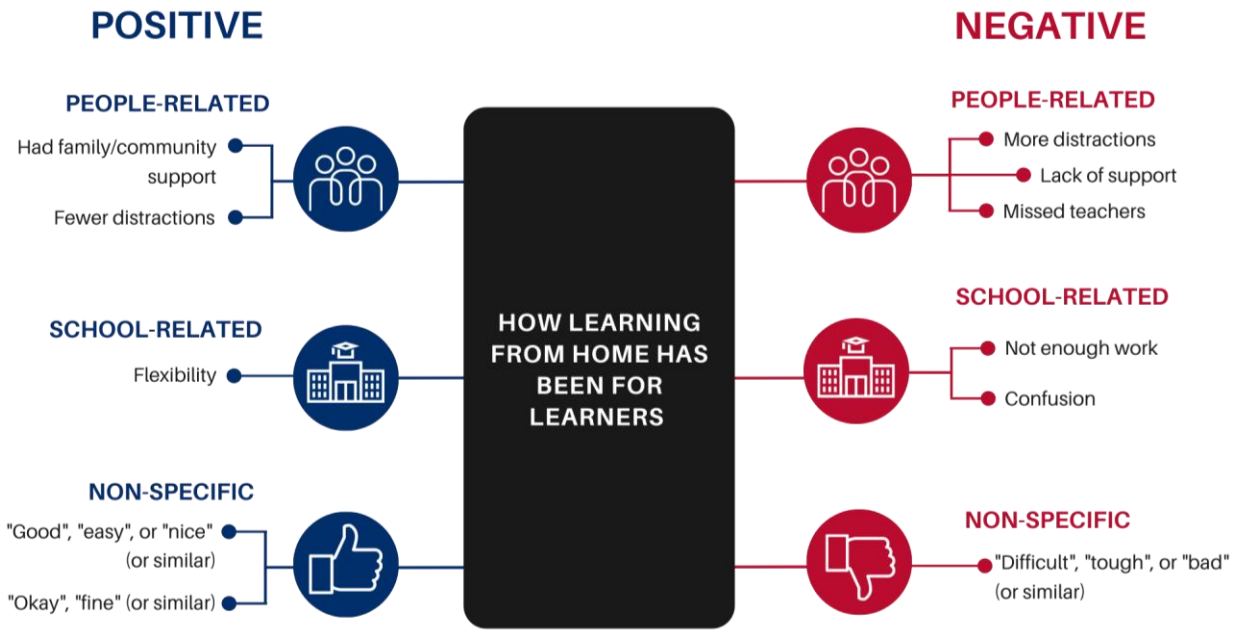
Question	Response	Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	p
	Their academic performance has decreased	24%	29%	18%	0.000
	They are anxious about going to school	6%	17%	10%	0.000
	They are more stressed	7%	14%	9%	0.000
	Nothing	36%	12%	22%	0.000
In your opinion, in what ways has COVID-19 affected your child(ren)'s learning/education?	They are not attending school every day	48%	50%	35%	0.000
	There is too much work/ homework	42%	48%	44%	0.063
	Their academic performance has worsened	43%	36%	22%	0.000
	They are not completing the syllabus	28%	26%	17%	0.000
	The quality of education provided by the school has decreased	41%	28%	15%	0.000
	I cannot assist with homework/ so they cannot understand the work	10%	20%	12%	0.000
	There is not enough work for them to do	6%	13%	8%	0.000
	They are not getting as much food at school	8%	11%	10%	0.092
	No impact	10%	4%	27%	0.000

Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Multiple response options. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Learners

In order to explore the impact of COVID-19 on learning, learners were asked the following question: "Tell me about how learning from home has been for you?"

Figure 80: Learners' experience of learning at home



Source: Learner well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 3,376 learner responses from 216 schools.

To answer this question, responses have been classified as either positive or negative, and sub-themes have been grouped as either being people-related or school-related. Additionally, many respondents provided very short answers to this question, such as responding that learning from home has been "difficult" "tough" or "bad" (or something similar) (20% of respondents responded in this way), 37 percent of learners responded saying that it has been "good" "easy" or "nice" (or something similar), and 21 percent of respondents responded saying that it has been "okay" "fine" or similar.

Table 33: Learners positive and negative views of learning from home

Sentiment	Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of learners mentioning
Positive	People-related	Had family/community support	403	11%
		Fewer distractions	82	2%
		Other (learning with friends, more family time)	30	1%
	School-related	Flexibility	82	3%
		Other (learning with friends)	21	1%
	Nonspecific	"Good" "easy" or "nice" (or something similar)	1185	37%
		"Okay" "fine" or similar	657	21%
		Total	**2460**	**49%**
Negative	People-related	More distractions	138	4%
		Lack of support	129	4%
		Missed teachers	64	2%
		Other (missed friends)	28	1%
	School-related	Not enough work (given or completed)	64	2%
		Confusion	63	2%
		Other (too much work, PPE & protocols)	17	0,4%
	Nonspecific	"Difficult" "tough" or "bad" (or something similar)	647	21%
		Total	**1150**	**17%**
	No response		**310**	**10%**

Source: Learner well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 3 376 learner responses from 216 schools.

Four percent of learners reported that learning from home meant that there were more distractions, including being able to play with friends; siblings and other family members being noisy or distracting; needing to do chores at home; family members being sick; and being able to watch television. While some learners stated that this was a negative experience, not all learners shared this sentiment:

"Not so good, because of distractions such as TV and house chores" (Boy, age 10)

"It was good, no disturbance and watching TV for a long time" (Boy, age 12)

"I couldn't do my homework, because I had to take care of my two little siblings. I had to feed them and play with them." (Girl, age 9)

Four percent (128) of learners mentioned that they did not have adequate learning support at home 129 times. This was due to a number of reasons, including their family members not being well-educated enough to assist or not understanding their child/ren's schoolwork; family members being busy or working and being unable to assist with schoolwork; or caregivers being sick.

"It was just okay but I prefer being at school because teachers are there to assist as best as they can as they're trained to do so unlike at home, my elders don't really [k]no[w] much about our curriculum" (Girl, age 13)

"It was not fun learning from home because I could not understand what I needed to do and there was no one to assist. I also struggled with mathematics." (Girl, age 13)

As a sort of a bridge between home-related and school-related sub-themes, 2 percent of learners mentioned missing their teachers. This was often linked with the above discussion of lacking sufficient learning support at home, and feeling that teachers were better equipped to provide this support. Learners reported being confused with school work because of a lack of support at home and not going into school where teachers can explain work to learners (mentioned by 2 percent of learners 63 times). The lack of support was sometimes linked with work not being completed by learners as they were not sure which work they were meant to be doing, or they were not sure how to complete the work they had been given. However, learners also mentioned that work was not always given to them, and so they were not able to do any work from home.

"It was tough I didn't get enough from my family members, I missed my teacher [and] friends who is always helpful to my learning." (Girl, age 13)

"It was difficult, my mother cannot read or write and she could not help me with my homework." (Boy, age 13)

"It's horrible because learning from its not good enough, I needed guidance from my class teacher, I managed to learn and read only few st[u]ff.. The exciting part was that I did that at my own pace." (Boy, age 12)

This learner above mentions one of the positive elements of working from home which 3 percent (82) of learners brought up – flexibility and being able to work at one's own pace. This meant that learners were able to work through their schoolwork at their pace, have family members take time to explain confusing work to them, or get ahead of their schoolwork depending on their abilities and understandings.

"It was better because I could do all the homework; I had time on my hands compared at school time is limited." (Girl, age 15)

"I liked it because I can spend more time teaching myself new things while being with my family. I am fortunate because my dad also helps me with my school work." (Boy, age 11)

"It was much better, my mom took time to help me with school work and make sure I understand everything before we moved to another subject." (Girl, age 9)

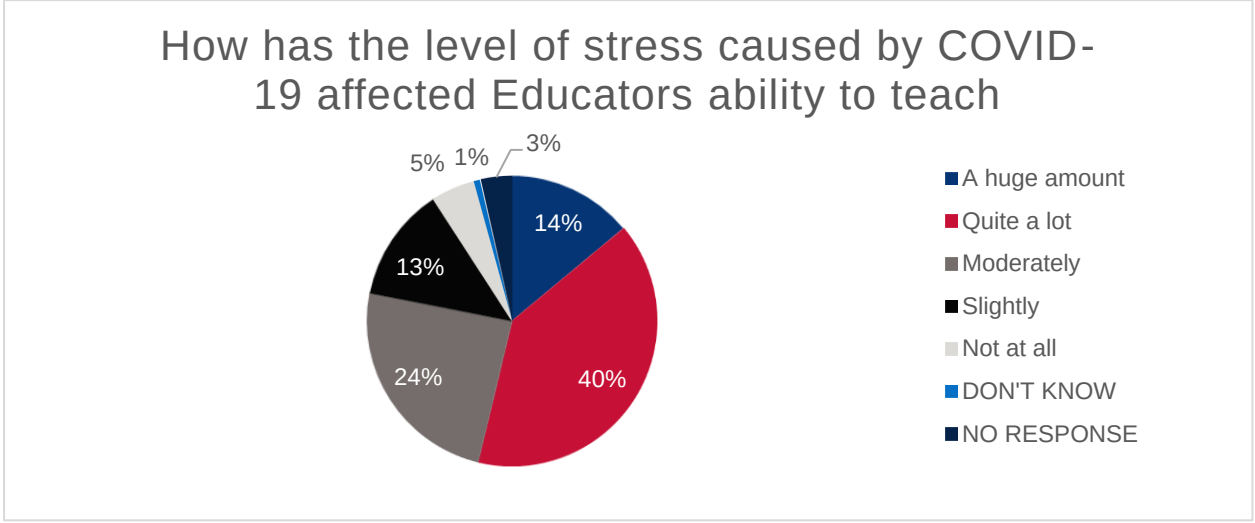
This flexibility and ability to work at one's own pace was also linked with having learning support from the learner's family or community, which was mentioned 403 times by 11 percent of respondents. Learners noted that their caregivers, caregivers, family members, neighbors, or siblings assisted them with their schoolwork, and this helped them with their learning from home experience and also meant increased time spent together. However, it must be remembered that this could potentially be a burden for these individuals, as they are now acting as teachers as well as caregivers while continuing to work at their jobs or continuing with their own studies and other responsibilities.

While 4 percent of learners mentioned there were more distractions at home than at school (as mentioned above), 2 percent of learners said the opposite, and reported that they experienced fewer distractions at home than they do at school, as home was quieter and there were no other learners around to disturb them. This meant that it was easier to focus and concentrate at home. This was one of the reasons that 2 percent of learners reported that home is better than school. Here, it is clear that learners' experiences of disruptions and, to some extent, their ability to concentrate and focus on their schoolwork during the past year is largely dependent on factors like the size of their home, the size of their family, how invested their family is in their schoolwork, their family members' level of education, the amount of free time caregivers have to assist learners with schoolwork, the location of their home, and to what extent they have to share space (amongst others) and so just because all learners are learning from home, does not mean equal learning for all learners.

Educators

Educators were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning. 55 percent of educators said that the level of stress caused by COVID-19 has affected their ability to teach "a huge amount" (14%) or "quite a lot" (40%). Only 5 percent of educators indicated that it had not impacted on their ability to teach at all. This clearly highlights that teaching has been impacted on by the stress that COVID-19 has caused and raises questions about what the ripple effect has been for learners and learning.

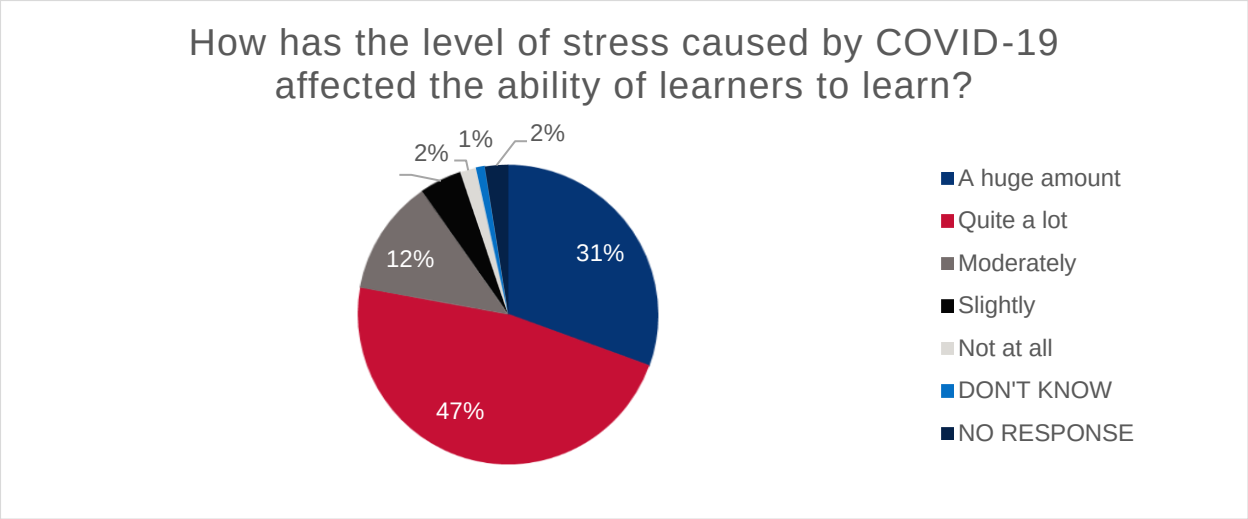
Figure 81: Effect of stress on educators' ability to teach



Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

This is partly answered by educators' responses when asked how the level of stress caused by COVID-19 has affected the ability of learners to learn. In response, 78 percent indicated that it affected learners "a huge amount" (31%) or "quite a lot" (47%). In fact, only 2 percent of educators indicated that there has been no impact on learners' ability to learn.

Figure 82: Educators' view of learner stress caused by COVID-19



Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

APPENDIX 4: Detailed Findings on Psychosocial Support

This section responds to the research question 3:

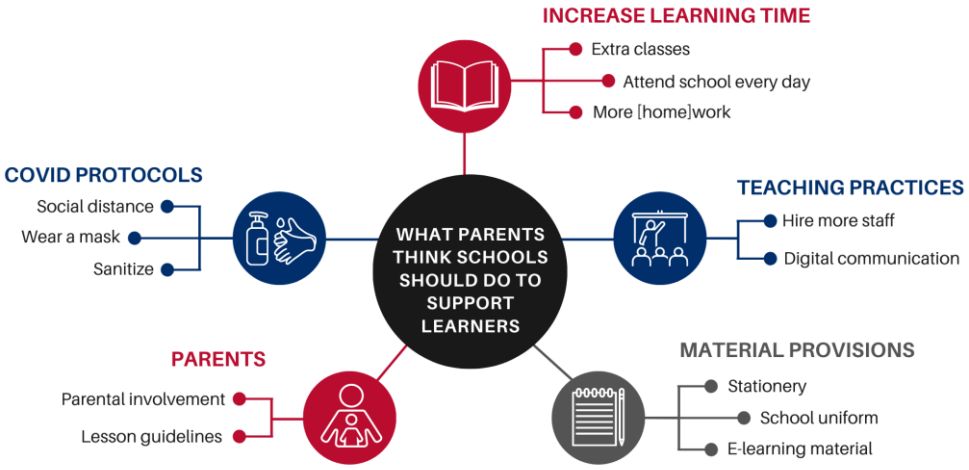
3. What psychosocial and practical support can be provided to teachers and learners to help reduce their stress, and support their ability to teach?

PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO REDUCE COVID-19 RELATED STRESS

Caregivers

Altogether 1,925 caregivers were asked what they think schools should do to help support learners during this time? 17 percent (334) of caregivers said that they were unsure, 2 percent (46) of responses were unable to be interpreted or coded, and 1 percent (13) refused to respond. In addition, 6 percent (106) reported that there is nothing that their school should be doing differently and should therefore continue as they are doing. This leaves 1426 caregivers whose responses could be thematically analyzed. Note that the percentages reported in this section are based on the total number of caregivers reached initially (i.e., 1,925). The themes that emerged can be placed within five broad thematic areas namely: Increase learning time, alteration of teaching practices, material provisions, COVID-19 protocols and caregivers. These are further broken down into subthemes, which will be discussed in detail in this report.

Figure 83: Caregiver recommendations on how to support educators



Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

The table below outlines the themes and subthemes, as well as how many times they were mentioned and the percent of caregivers that mentioned them.

Table 34: Detailed caregiver recommendations on how to support educators

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	% of parents mentioning
Increasing learning time	Extra classes	515	26%
	School every day	140	7%
	More work/ homework	118	6%
	Other (e.g., study group, aftercare)	46	2%
	Total	**819**	**41%**
Teaching practices	Hire more teachers/ staff	134	7%
	Digital communication (e.g., WhatsApp) and online learning	63	3%
	Other (e.g., learner encouragement, less workload, extra-mural activities)	235	12%
	Total	**432**	**22%**
Materials	Including stationery, school uniform, e-learning provisions, food, and transport	**318**	**16%**
COVID-19 Protocols	Including social distancing, wearing a mask, sanitizing, and receiving vaccinations at school	**206**	**8%**
Caregivers	Parental involvement	70	3%
	Lesson guidelines	27	1%
	Parents' responsibility	13	1%
	Total	**110**	**6%**
Counselling	Learner counselling	**1**	**0.1%**
Nothing	School is doing enough	**106**	**6%**
Unsure	Parents don't know	**334**	**17%**
Un-codeable	Cannot interpret/ code	**47**	**2%**
Refused	Refused to respond	**13**	**0.7%**

Source: GeoPoll caregiver survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,925 caregiver responses from 191 schools.

Increasing learning time

In response to a qualitative open-ended question: "What do you think schools could do to help support learners during this time?", the majority of caregivers (41%) said that the school should increase learning time though strategies including extra classes (26%), allowing learners to attend school every day (7%), and giving them more work (6%), so that they could catch up with the syllabus.

"Extra classes so that they will be able to pass at the end of the year because they're behind with their schoolwork." (Mother, 49)

"They should attend every day as we are on Level 1." (Mother, 35)

Some caregivers also expressed feeling unable to adequately help their child(ren) with schoolwork at home.

"Children need extra classes because we, as caregivers, are struggling to help them." (Father, 44)

"A child lives with granny and granny is not able to help with homework." (Mother, 38)

Teaching practices

Twenty-two percent of caregivers spoke about the teaching practices at the schools. Specifically, 7 percent suggested hiring more teachers or teachers' assistants to help with extra classes and homework, and 4 percent expressed that the schools should communicate digitally with caregivers and learners (e.g., WhatsApp, SMS), as well as implement online learning.

"They must have assistant teachers and try to attend [to learners] individually." (Mother, 46)

"WhatsApp groups with teachers and other caregivers will be helpful." (Father, 31)

Twelve percent of caregivers mentioned other suggestions, such as encouraging and supporting learners more than before, reducing the workload, and reintroducing extra-mural activities (such as playing on the playground, sports, and drama)-with the proper COVID-19 regulations in place.

"Teachers need to work with caregivers to support learners." (Father, 32)

"Schools should not give children more work as it puts pressure on them." (Mother, 26)

"They must do social distance. They must allow learners to play soccer and netball in order for them to exercise. The more they exercise, the more they concentrate." (Mother, 50)

Material provisions

Altogether 300 caregivers (16%) mentioned the need for schools to provide material support to learners, especially those who need it the most, in the form of stationary and other study materials (such as textbooks, calculators, and dictionaries), and to allow learners to take these materials home with them in order to complete their work at home (4%).

"To give them food at school and help us with learners through studying material." (Mother, 30)

Three percent also expressed the need for providing nutritious and balanced meals to learners at school, in order for them to be able to concentrate better with their schoolwork and relieve some of the burden on the caregivers/caregivers.

"Give them enough food because I'm a pensioner, I can't afford everything." (Mother, 69)

"They must give children lunch, even though the school is closed, because families are not equal." (Father, 48)

"Make a big garden for the kids to grow more vegetables to cook for them." (Mother, 35)

"If they can, give them food parcels because many caregivers lost their jobs." (Mother, 59)

A small portion of caregivers (3%) also mentioned the need to be provided with e-learning devices (such as laptops, tablets, smartphones, and data) in order to be able to accommodate online learning, particularly in cases where caregivers are unable to afford them.

"They must give them tablets because we don't have resources to give them." (Mother, 34)

"Give them tablet[s] for online studying and extra communication." (Father, 34)

The remainder of caregivers (6%) mentioned the need for other material provisions, including school uniform, transport to school, and improved facilities (such as a library).

"to give kids free school uniform, it's expensive and caregivers can't afford as I do piece jobs." (Father, 38)

"If they can hire the buses to fetch the students because we don't have money to pay for transport." (Mother, 42)

"They must help them by building libraries so that they can study there. They must also buy more books because they are sharing books." (Mother, 57)

COVID-19 protocols

Eight percent (153) of caregivers mentioned that schools need to uphold and monitor COVID-19 safety protocols, such as ensuring that learners maintain social distance, always sanitizing their hands before they enter the classroom, and ensuring that they always wear a mask. Caregivers also suggested that schools provide learners with sanitizer and masks if they are unable to afford it for themselves.

"They must always make sure that children at school are always following safety protocols." (Mother, 43)

"If they can help them with sanitizer and masks because [some] cannot afford because we [are] struggling." (Mother, 20)

Some caregivers also expressed wanting children to get vaccinated at school.

"If they can vaccinate all the students and teach them more about COVID-19." (Father, 34)

Communication

Ninety-three caregivers (4%) mentioned that schools should communicate with and involve caregivers more in their child(ren)'s schoolwork, and relatedly, the need for more guidance and structure in the form of lesson plans or guidelines to help caregivers better teach their child(ren) at home.

"More communication with caregivers on daily activities and how to teach kids." (Mother, 36)

"They should communicate with caregivers to be more involved in their children's schoolwork." (Mother, 36)

In response to the question, "What do you think schools could do to help support learners during this time?", a small portion of caregivers (13, 1%) said that it was the caregivers' responsibility to support learners.

"We must be responsible for our kids always, not just let the teachers do everything." (Mother, 49)

Batsadi ba thuse barutabana ka go ruta bana ge ba fitlha kwa gae (English translation: "Caregivers should help teachers by teaching learners at home"). (Mother, 39)

It is evident that the vast majority of caregivers suggested practical ways to support learners during this time, and only one caregiver suggested psychosocial support for learners in the form of counselling.

"Provide counselling, and [learners] need extra classes because they don't go to school and, right now, it's towards the end of the year and they are behind on the syllabus." (Mother, 24)

While some responses coded within the "Un-codeable" theme were unable to be interpreted, others were too unique to form part of any of the major themes identified. For example:

Go tshwanetse go re go be le thapelo ba opele (English translation: "there has to be a prayer so that they can sing.") (Mother, 54)

"If they can, invite Department of Health to visit all schools." (Father, 42)

"They should do what seems right for our kids." (Mother, 32)

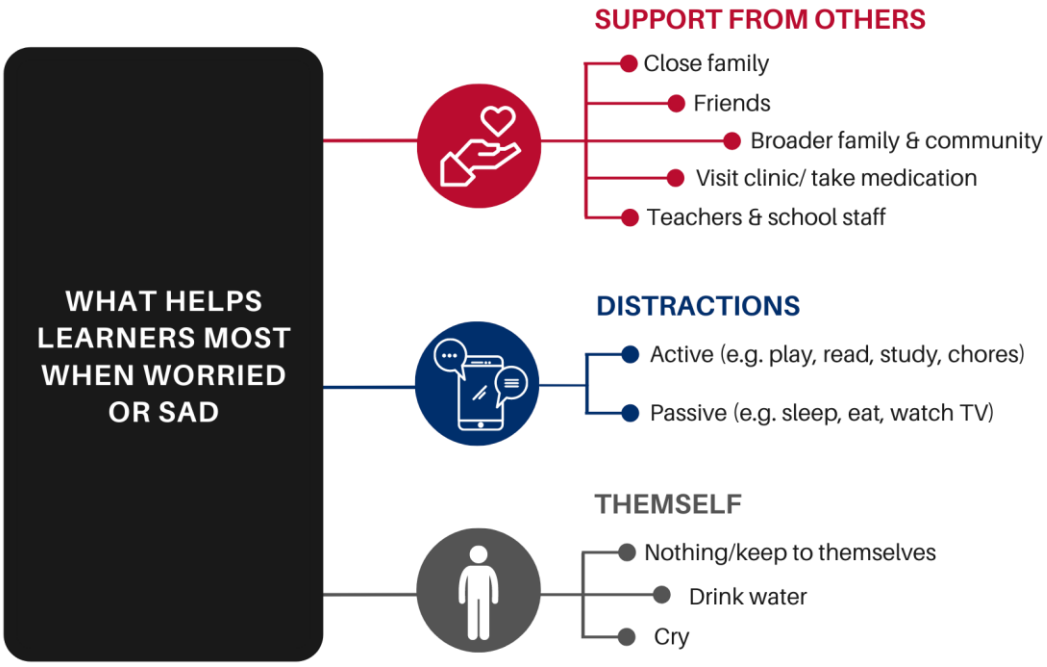
Themes by Gender

Lastly, themes were analyzed by gender in order to reveal any interesting differences in responses between mothers and fathers. However, no noteworthy differences emerged, as the percentage of mothers and fathers in each thematic area were similar. For instance, 42 percent of mothers compared to 40 percent of fathers suggested ways of increasing learning time, and material provisions was mentioned by 16 percent of mothers and 15 percent of fathers.

Learners

Learners were asked what helps them the most when they are worried or sad as a way of exploring what forms of support are most helpful to them.

Figure 84: Learner coping mechanisms



Source: Learner well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 3,376 learner responses from 216 schools.

Responses to this question have been grouped under the themes of: Support from others (including one's family, friends, medical staff, and school staff) which was the most prominent theme, Distractions (including active and passive sorts of distractions), and helping oneself (such as crying, staying alone, and drinking water). However, it should be noted that many learners reported using a range of these methods to help them feel less worried or sad, which is illustrated in some of the quotations below. Twelve percent (380) of respondents did not respond to this question, 0,5 percent (15) did not know what they do when they feel worried or sad, and 0,3 percent (11) reported that they do not get worried or sad ever.

Table 35: Detailed learner coping mechanisms

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of learners mentioning
Support from others	Close family (mother, father, siblings)	1,039	23%
	Friends	360	11%
	Broader family & community	143	4%
	Visiting the clinic/taking medication	125	4%
	Teachers & school staff	90	3%
	Total	**1,757**	**45%**
Distractions	Active (play, read/study/doing schoolwork, doing chores)	689	20%
	Passive (sleep, watch TV, listen to music, eat, use a phone)	479	13%
	Other (go outside, walk/run/exercise, sing, dance, do yoga)	67	2%
	Total	**1235**	**35%**
Them self	Nothing/keep to them self	229	7%
	Drink water	94	3%
	Cry	55	2%
	Other (religion, forgiveness/reconcile, violence/retaliation)	50	2%
	Total	**428**	**14%**
No response	Refused to respond	380	12%
Unsure	Learner does not know	15	0.5%
Does not happen	Learner does not get sad or worried	11	0.3%

Source: Learner well-being survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 3 376 learner responses from 216 schools.

Twenty-three percent of learners responded that when they are worried or sad, their close family helps them the most by talking to them, supporting them, or comforting them. This forms part of the 'Support from others' theme. Support from mothers was the most common, which was mentioned 718 times by 22 percent (717) of respondents, followed by support from fathers which was mentioned 193 times by 6 percent (193) learners, and support from their siblings (mentioned by 128 times by 4% of learners). Four percent of learners also mentioned support from their broader family and broader community (including neighbors, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and elders) 143 times.

"When I feel sad I always talk to my Mother because I am very close with her, she knows how to comfort me." (Boy, age 12)

"I usually talk to my sister when sad and that makes me feel better." (Girl, age 10)

"My mom and uncle are very supportive especially when I am down. I also like playing with my dolls." (Girl, age 9)

Support from friends was mentioned 360 times by 11 percent (361) respondents, especially playing with friends (mentioned by 6% of learners). Additionally, 4 percent (122) of respondents reported that going to the clinic or taking medication makes them feel better when they are worried or sad, while 3% (89) of respondents reported that they talk to a teacher or a staff member from their school (including school social workers) when they feel worried or sad as they are able to assist them with problems like bullying or with their schoolwork.

"Playing with my friends; soccer it helps me feel much better." (Boy, age 13)

When I'm at school, I tell my class teacher what's bothering me and if he can't solve it they call my caregivers. Sometimes at school they bring social workers to come and talk to us about things that upset us. When I'm at home I talk to my mom or my brother or go play with my friends. (Boy, age 9)

The next theme is that of learners using distractions to make them feel better when they are worried or sad, with the sub-themes of active distractions (which were mentioned altogether 689 times) and passive distractions (being mentioned 479 times). The most common active distraction was that of playing, including playing sports, (mentioned 410 times by 13% respondents), followed by reading, writing or doing school work (mentioned 256 times by 8% of respondents), and doing household chores (mentioned 38 times by 1% of respondents).

"I like to play. I also like to read to forget about the problems. I also take medication to feel better." (Boy, age 11)

"I like to read Setswana books because they help me feel better. I also enjoy playing ball and spending time with my friends." (Boy, age 11)

Passive distractions mentioned by learners as helping them feel less worried or sad included learners sleeping (mentioned 209 times by 7% of respondents), watching television (mentioned 137 times by 4% of respondents), listening to music (61 mentions by 2% of respondents), eating (42 mentions by 1% of respondents), and using a phone (mentioned 30 times by 1% of respondents).

"Ke lebelela TV go fitlha ko robala mme mo mosong ke tla tsoga ke siame " English translation: "I watch TV till I sleep then I feel better when I wake up." (Girl, age 9)

Learners also mentioned that they keep to themselves or self-soothe when they feel worried or sad, or that they do not do anything when they feel this way. 7 percent (226) of respondents reported that they keep to themselves or like to be alone when they are feeling down, and 3 percent (94) of respondents mentioned that they drink water to feel better. Crying was mentioned by 2 percent (55) of respondents.

"I try to relax myself and take a glass of water." (Girl, age 12)

"I sit alone and it helps me feel so much better." (Girl, age 13)

Themes by Gender

Themes were analyzed by gender in order to reveal any interesting differences in responses between female and male learners. There were 1609 female learners, and 1581 male learners who took part in this research. However, no noteworthy differences emerged, as the percentages of girls and boys in each thematic area were similar. For instance, 15 percent of girls and 17 percent of boys reported that they struggled with school subjects in the past year, 12 percent of girls and 11 percent of boys reported having family or community support while working from home, and 24 percent of girls and 21 percent of boys noted that they get support from their mother when they are feeling worried or sad. The largest difference found was when looking at the sub-theme of active distractions under Question 3, and this was that 11 percent (174) of girls and 15 percent (234) of boys reported that they play when they are feeling worried or sad.

Themes by Age

Lastly, themes were analyzed by age group in order to reveal any interesting differences in responses between learners between the ages of 6-12 and between 13-19. There were 2169 learners between the ages of 6 and 12 years, and 994 learners between the ages of 13 and 19 years. A few slight differences were found, including 14 percent (302) of learners between the ages of 6 and 12 years compared to 22 percent (219) of learners between 13 and 19 years of age reporting that they struggled with school subjects in the last year, which was the largest difference between age groups. Interestingly, and in line with this, more younger learners (21%, 459) than older learners (16%, 261) reported that nothing had been difficult for them in the past year, which indicates that older learners struggled more in the past year than younger learners. Also, 25 percent (244) of learners between 13 and 19 years compared to 18 percent (397) of learners between 6 and 12 years reported that learning from home was difficult, bad, or tough, while 39 percent (856) of younger learners and 32 percent (320) of older learners reported that learning from home was good, easy, or nice.

Educators

When teachers were asked what kinds of support would help them improve their ability to cope with stress and challenges caused by COVID-19, trainings on managing stress were expressed by 42 percent of teachers, 38 percent said trainings on how to support learner well-being, while 34 percent said group sessions with other teachers to discuss stress and support each other. Educators seem to understand that they need support and are able to suggest what format these may take. Educators were also not only concerned about getting support for their own well-being, but also interested in getting tools and skills that will enable them to support learners. Teachers continue to play an important role in supporting learners' well-being which goes beyond teaching and therefore they should be provided with the skills to be able to do so effectively.

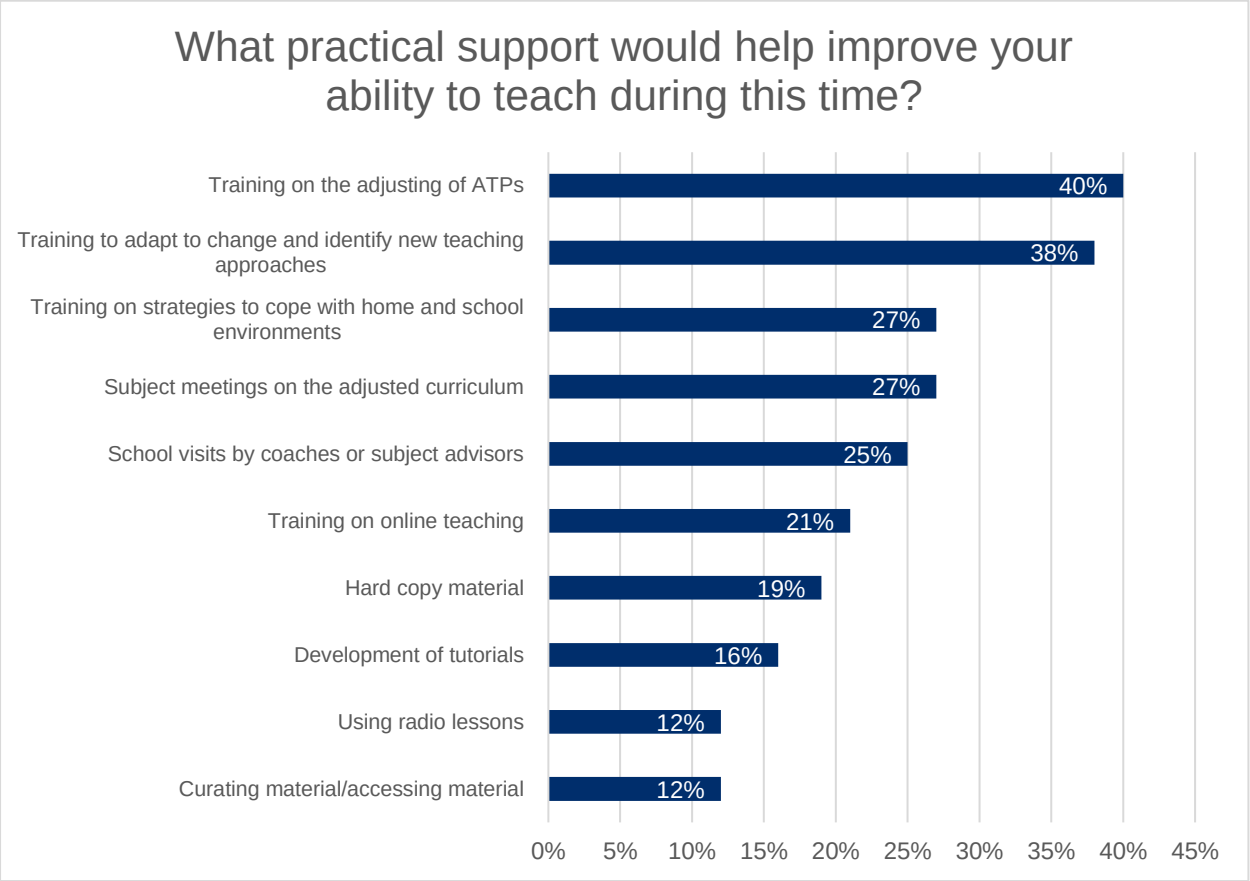
Table 36: Educators recommendations on support to reduce stress

What kinds of support would help improve your ability to cope with the stress and challenges caused by COVID-19?		Frequency
Trainings on managing stress	n	508
	%	42%
Trainings on how to support learner's well-being	n	458
	%	38%
Group sessions with other teachers where we can discuss stress and support each other	n	413
	%	34%
Individual sessions with a counsellor where I can discuss what I am struggling with	n	381
	%	32%
Peer support - creating spaces for teachers to support each other	n	310
	%	26%
Messages via WhatsApp on practical ways to manage stress	N	231
	%	19%
Regular support meetings with my HOD or principal	n	231
	%	19%
Don't know	n	33
	%	3%
None	n	30
	%	3%

Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Multiple response options allowed for this question. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

The kinds of practical support that teachers said would help improve their ability to teach during this time included training on the adjusting of Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) (40%), training to adapt to change and identify new teaching approaches (38%), subject meetings on the adjusted curriculum (27%), and training on strategies to cope with home and school environments (27%). Educators are invested in learning new ways to teach, adjust curriculum and support learners. Finding appropriate trainings that could address this need is important.

Figure 85: Educators practical support recommendation



Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Multiple response options allowed for this question. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Furthermore, educators were asked whether there are any other forms of support that would help their ability to cope. Just over half (51%) did not respond to this question, 5 percent said there were no other forms of support, 3 percent of responses were unable to be interpreted or coded, and 1 percent of educators said they were unsure. Educators' responses to this question were extremely varied, therefore, six broad themes were identified. These are Practical support; Psychosocial support; Communication; Caregivers, learners and community, Health, and Personal support. These are further broken down into subthemes, which will be discussed in detail in this report.

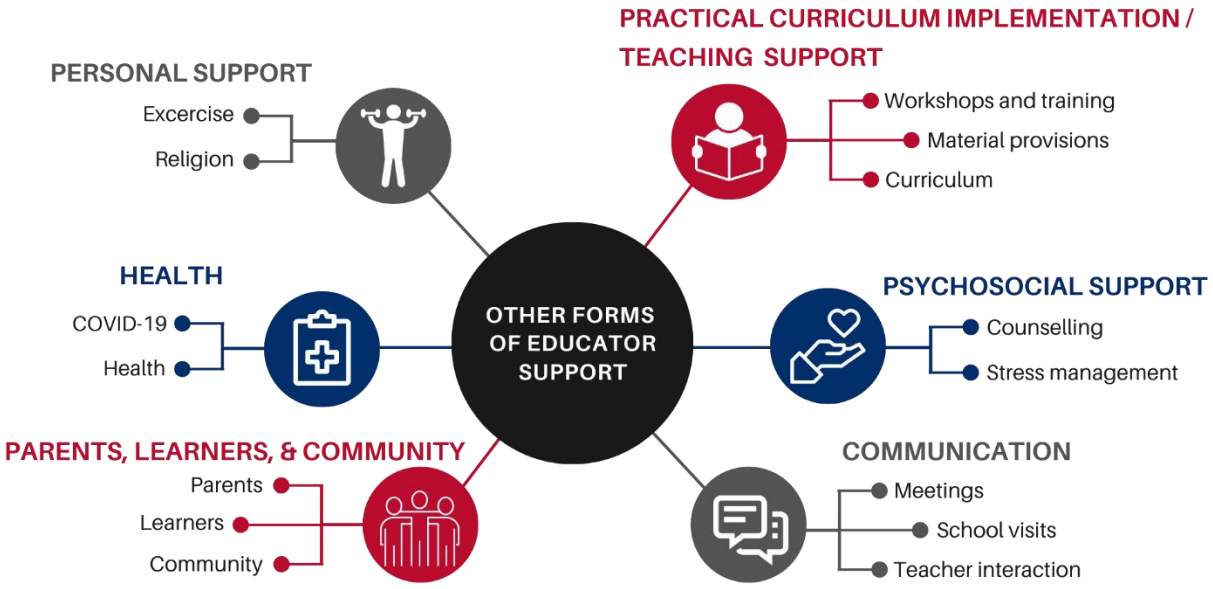


Figure 86: Educator views of the other types of educator support needed

Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

The table below outlines the six broad themes and subthemes, the number of times they were mentioned, as well as the percentage of educators mentioning them.

Table 37: Detailed educator views of the other types of educator support needed

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of educators mentioning
Practical support	Workshops and training	109	9%
	Material provisions	10	5%
	Curriculum	54	4%
	Hiring more staff	49	4%
	Less work	10	1%
	Total	**270**	**23%**
Psychosocial support	Counselling	**170**	**13%**
Communication	Meetings, visits, interaction	**61**	**5%**
PLC	Caregivers, learners, and community	**44**	**4%**
Health	COVID-19 and health	**32**	**3%**
Personal support	Personal coping methods (e.g., exercise)	**15**	**1%**

Themes	Subthemes	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of educators mentioning
No response	Did not respond	**609**	**51%**
Nothing	No other forms of support	**54**	**5%**
Un-codeable	Unable to be interpreted or coded	**31**	**3%**
Unsure	They don't know	**12**	**1%**

Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Open-ended response format. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Practical support

The importance of practical support measures was reiterated 273 times by 23 percent of educators. These include workshops and training (9%), material provisions (5%), curriculum (4%) and increasing staff (4%).

Workshops and training

Workshops and training were mentioned over 100 times by 9 percent of educators. Including training on adjusted ATPs, online learning, and COVID-19.

"Training to adapt to change and identify new teaching approaches, training on the adjusting of ATPs, subject meetings on the adjusted curriculum." (Female, 43)

"There should be training on online teaching between teachers and learners." (Female, 47)

Material provisions

Material provisions were mentioned 80 times by 5 percent of educators, including more classroom space, furniture (desks and chairs), PPE, devices for online learning, and reading materials.

"Education department to provide schools with extra classrooms, furniture and more educators so that all learners can attend the whole week. Provide us with the educators assistants and general assistants as to make our job easier during COVID-19." (Female, 50)

"Educational technology for home schooling and home teaching." (Male, 57)

"Department of transport should bring more buses for learners." (Female, 34)

Curriculum

4 percent of educators spoke about the curriculum in terms of the adjusted ATPs and how to recover lost learning time in order to complete the curriculum.

"Methods on recovery plan to bridge the gap on the content coverage." (Female, 52)

"Trimmed ATP with only the fundamental topics to reduce workload that is expected to be done in limited time." (Female, 24)

Hiring more staff

The need for more staff to ease the workload and balance the teacher-learner ratio was mentioned by 4 percent of educators.

"Yes, the department can review educator assistants (EA's) in schools to help with workload since we are short of teachers." (Female, 35)

"Educator assistants played a crucial role during the first wave. Hiring of EA will improve my ability to cope." (Male, 29)

"The department should provide more teachers and classroom for leaners to be able to practice social distancing." (Female, 32)

Less workload

One percent of educators mentioned that reducing the workload will help their ability to cope.

"My main stress is caused by workload. As a PI1 educator I have too many periods to attend at times learners have to stay at home as per timetable. I give homework but they [come] back with work not done which makes it difficult to complete [the] syllabus. If the department could provide us with one additional teacher to assist maybe it may be a relief. I also assist principal with monitoring and moderation, I am sometimes unable to do that as I have a lot of classroom work." (Female, 32)

"Less admin done by teachers. Teachers are overworked with admin." (Female, 53)

Psychosocial support

Following practical support, 13 percent of educators reiterated psychosocial support, such as professional counselling, stress management, and peer (teacher) support groups.

"It is very hard to think of any. I personally feel oppressed and hopeless. Serious counselling will do." (Male, 29)

"Messages on WhatsApp on practical ways to improve my ability to cope." (Male, 56)

"To have group discussions where we can discuss and support each other." (Female, 43)

Communication

Five percent of educators spoke about the need for better communication, whether it be through more meetings with SMT members, better dissemination of information, or more interaction with and support from other educators in the district.

"Constant communique on rules and regulations of COVID-19 management from sub-district officials and other stakeholders." (Female, 29)

"Subject meetings on the adjusted curriculum." (Female, 56)

"Regular meetings with HOD or principal to support our challenges." (Female, 47)

Caregivers, learners, and community

Four percent of educators mentioned caregivers, learners, or the community. For instance, the need for more caregiver involvement in their child's schoolwork.

"Training for caregivers on how to assist learners with their schoolwork at home." (Female, 30)

"Support caregivers who live with our learners and are unable to read and write." (Female, 45)

"Learners work to be reduced to match the present situation and learners be given a chance to work at own pace." (Female, 52)

Health and COVID-19

Three percent of educators spoke about COVID-19 protocols and health-related matters.

"COVID-19 tests must be done in schools. School must be fumigated always. Department must provide with all necessary equipment like mobile classes." (Male, 52)

"Encouraging each other to be vaccinated." (Female, 44)

"Regular visit from the department of health to teach our learners about COVID-19 so that they take this virus serious." (Female, 47)

Personal support

Around 1 percent of educators mentioned ways in which they support themselves to cope. This includes, for instance, exercise or religion.

"Re-balance work and home, regular exercise, connect with supportive people." (Female, 31)

"Make time to unwind, talk to others, connect with the community or faith-based organizations." (Female, 39)

1.2 KIND OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PRACTICAL SUPPORT DO SCHOOLS FEEL MOST ABLE TO PROVIDE? (RQ3.2)

Educators

Teachers were further asked about the kinds of psychosocial support they could access at their respective schools. The most common forms of psychosocial support accessed were regular support meetings with the HOD or principal (27%), trainings on how to support learners' well-being (26%), peer support space for teachers to support one another (26%), and group sessions with other teachers where we can discuss stress and support each other (26%). The least common kind of psychosocial support accessed was individual sessions with a counsellor (14%), and 16 percent of teachers said that there were no kind of psychological or practical support they could access at their school. It seems that although some forms of support exist in schools, few respondents identified many.

Table 38: Kinds of support available to educators

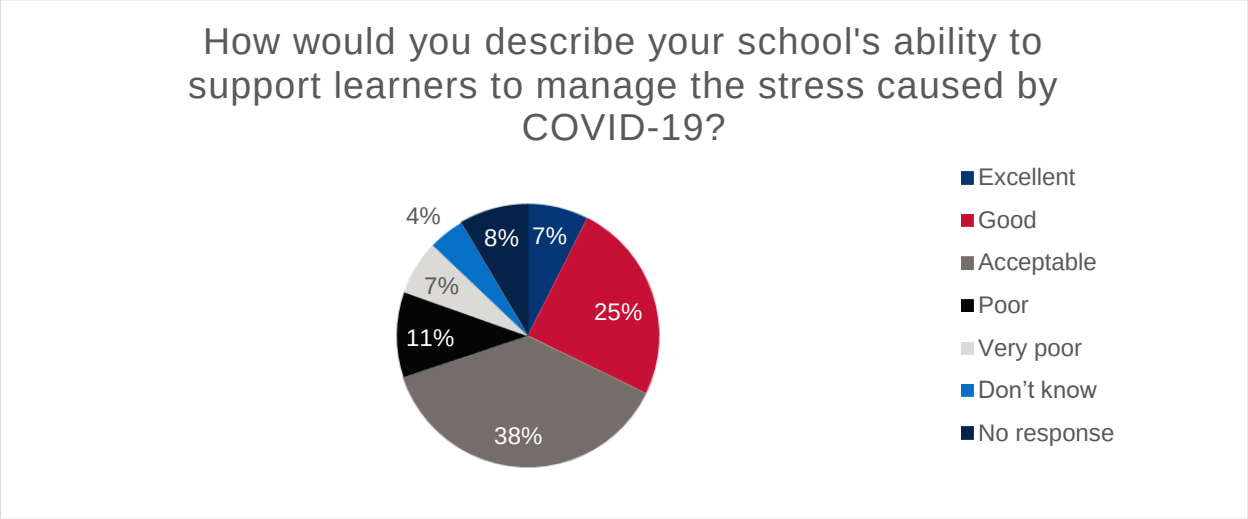
Which of the following kinds of psychological or practical support can you access at your school?		Frequency
Regular support meetings with my HOD or principal	n	326
	%	27%
Trainings on how to support learner's well-being	n	319
	%	26%
Peer support - spaces for teachers to support each other	n	319
	%	26%
Group sessions with other teachers where we can discuss stress and support each other	n	320
	%	26%
Trainings on managing stress	n	246
	%	20%
Messages via WhatsApp on practical ways to manage stress	n	245
	%	20%
Individual sessions with a counsellor where I can discuss what I am struggling with	n	170
	%	14%
None	n	196
	%	16%

Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Multiple response options allowed for this question. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

Thirty-eight percent of educators described their school's ability to support learners to manage the stress caused by COVID-19 as 'acceptable', 25 percent said 'good', and 17 percent said 'poor' or 'very poor'. This indicates that educators feel that schools are able to provide support to learners in relation to managing the COVID-19 related stress. Again, this highlights the role that the school

place as a source of psychosocial support in the lives of learners. It is important that the support they access through schools is appropriate and effective.

Figure 87: Educator views of the school's ability to support learners stress



Source: COVID-19 educator survey. **Notes:** Single response option. 1,217 educator responses from 182 schools, of which 195 were SMT members (16%).

APPENDIX 5: References

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